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BUSES

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WHAT MAKES FINGLANDS TICK?

Midlands Bus Memories in Colour



SIX MIDLANDS BUS MEMORIES books to be won

- Takeover: Alexander Dennis buys Plaxton
- Stagecoach acquires Cooks, quits Darlington
- Routemasters target tourists in Norfolk and Malta

Ian Allan



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▲ **PAGE 10 - Wright for the SchoolRun**
PAUL JENKINSON



▲ **PAGE 13 - Bryn Melyn for GHA**
DAVID STANIER

READER COMPETITION PAGE 31
Six Midlands Bus Memories in Colour books to be won

COMPETITION WINNERS

The winners of the competition in May *Buses* to win books on Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus and an Open Road Pass from Bus Éireann were Bernard Allan of Cavan Town, M. Burningham of Barnard Castle, Nicholas Coombs of London NW1, R. Stevenson of Coventry, P. R. Swann of Kettering and Stephen Walker of Cockermonth. The correct answers were that CIÉ stands for Coras Iompair Éireann, most Bombardier double-deckers had Detroit Diesel engines and the Irish translation of 'city centre' is An Lár. Congratulations to all.



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MAD approach may offer a sensible outcome for everyone

For bus operators who regard the six passenger transport executives as the devil incarnate, the prospect — in the draft Local Transport Bill — of six, 16 or even 60 more English PTEs must seem like their worst nightmare. Additional passenger transport authorities, egged on by ambitious local politicians, telling them how, where and when to run their services, calling them names like 'robber barons' and hinting at seizing their assets.

Yet the government's latest proposals may actually contain the right balance of ingredients for better and busier bus services. And above all else, they reinforce the message in *Putting Passengers First*, the Department for Transport document published last December, that there is no single plan for buses. Solutions will be tailored to each area's needs.

Yes, more areas might want PTAs and PTEs to manage their public transport better than it is today. It also creates a possibility of enlarging or shrinking existing PTAs' and PTEs' areas, which also makes sense, for those conurbations have altered since their boundaries were established 33 years ago. Travel-to-work journeys now include communities beyond those boundaries, while others within those boundaries see themselves less tied to the biggest cities than they were in the 1970s.

Additional PTEs might also broaden the aspirations of the breed as a whole, especially if they include areas with no past history of direct

bus operation or a different political view of the world. They may embrace partnership with private sector operators more openly than the rhetoric of the Passenger Transport Executive Group sometimes suggests today.

Equally, the Bill's proposals to give PTEs powers to direct local authorities to provide infrastructure for buses are attractive, though this may be easier said than done. Expect reluctant councillors to protest loudly at pro-bus diktats issued by the executive arms of only indirectly elected transport authorities. And as Bus Users UK wisely points out, such powers are only valuable when accompanied by adequate funding.

As for the bus industry's great bogey, letting transport authorities franchise bus services through London-style quality contracts, yes the draft Bill — as expected — makes this possible and, sooner or later, someone somewhere will introduce such a regime, most likely where congestion charging also is introduced and public transport peak capacity is increased.

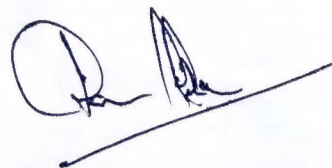
But the draft Bill also significantly changes the way authorities may fund deregulated services, allowing them to pay for, frequencies and hours of operation beyond those a commercial operator deems viable. There is still a competition test to pass, but that looks less forbidding than today.

Here may lie the way forward for most transport authorities. If they can specify and pay

for such things without them, will they want the agony, delays, legal costs and risk of failure of quality contracts? Already, PTEs' pressure for quality contract powers has taken bus operation into what nuclear warfare people call mutually assured destruction (MAD), the knowledge that they have the means of inflicting devastating damage on each other, but that this very fact also makes *rapprochement* more attractive.

South Yorkshire PTE is convinced (it may be right or it may be wrong) that First and Stagecoach would not have entered into partnerships so speedily had the PTE not looked seriously at conurbation-wide franchising. The operators risked losing all their business there, the PTE risked an expensive legal battle over the operators' ownership of their assets.

But away from the name calling, the 'robber barons' and 'Ptegosaurus dinosaurs' have begun to co-operate in ways that could mutually assure progress rather than destruction. That way may lie a better future for commercially ambitious operators and transport authorities answerable to their electors.



ALAN MILLAR



PAGE 54 - Robin Hood Lynx for Stagecoach East Midlands RICHARD GODFREY

IN BUSES NEXT MONTH On sale 20 JULY



Picture: PHIL HALEWOOD

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Prospect of new PTEs as government publishes Transport Bill

Additional passenger transport authorities and executives could be created in England after the government's newly published draft Local Transport Bill passes into law towards the end of next year.

As expected, the draft Bill — published on 22 May — paves the way for transport authorities in England and Wales to introduce London-style congestion charging and franchised bus networks, as foreshadowed in the government's *Putting Passengers First* document on bus services last December, but the possibility of additional PTA/Es is a surprise. Subject to ministerial approval, new PTA/Es could be created in any area where two or more adjoining councils agree that this how they wish to move forward. It would also be possible for existing PTA/Es to be dissolved, for adjoining local authorities to be added to their areas or for authorities to break away from a PTA/E, but only by agreement with the remaining councils.

The six PTA/Es in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South and West Yorkshire and Tyne & Wear all operate within metropolitan county

boundaries created in 1974. Councils in other conurbations like Southampton/Portsmouth, Bristol and Nottingham/Derby — some of which have lobbied for PTEs in the past — might advance the case for PTA/Es in their areas, while the development of city regions like Sheffield could lead theoretically to a redrawing of South Yorkshire PTE's boundaries to include Chesterfield and maybe exclude Rotherham and Doncaster.

While the Bill does not propose giving PTA/Es direct control over highways, it would let them direct local authorities in how they manage highways, especially on bus routes. PTA/Es would be able to instruct councils to install bus lanes and traffic calming measures to their specification, and forbid them from installing speed humps on a bus route. If councils refused to follow their direction, PTA/Es could execute the work themselves or recoup the cost from the councils.

Instead of separate local transport plans and bus strategies, PTA/Es would be charged with producing integrated transport strategies and implementation

plans, and be given additional powers to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their local community. These strategies could include congestion charging schemes linked to substantial increases in public transport provision.

The detailed proposals for quality contracts — allowing transport authorities to grant bus operators exclusive rights to run services to their specification — include a provision that any adverse effect on competition should be 'proportionate to the public interest benefits of the scheme'. Authorities would also have to satisfy the Department for Transport that quality contracts would increase the use of local bus services 'and bring benefits to people using them through the provision of services of a higher quality'. The DfT says 'increase' would include reducing, arresting or reversing declining bus use.

The Bill also would allow English and Welsh transport authorities to fund increased frequencies, hours of operation and quality of buses on deregulated services. Quality contracts would be run for up to 10

years, with extensions of up to another 10, while the maximum length of a contract for a secured deregulated route would increase from five to eight years.

Approval for quality contract regimes would rest with approvals boards comprising a traffic commissioner and two members of a panel appointed by the transport secretary. Authorities could appeal to the Transport Tribunal against any refusal. Although it generally welcomes the content of the draft Bill, the Passenger Transport Executive Group is unhappy with the proposed approvals boards. 'Bus franchising could be key to the implementation of a wider city region transport strategy agreed by democratically accountable local politicians. Unaccountable traffic commissioners and Transport Tribunals should not be able to torpedo those strategies,' it says.

Among bus operator reactions, Stagecoach says: 'If we get the legislation right, we can build on the growth in bus use we have seen in many towns and cities across the UK and deliver a further step-change in services,' adding: 'We continue to have concerns over some specific proposals, particularly quality contracts, and we will engage further with government on these issues. In the interests of passengers, we must also ensure the Bill is not hijacked by people determined to fight the political battles of yesterday rather than working together to develop the better buses of tomorrow.'

Graham Stevenson of the T&G section of the Unite trades union says it falls short of his members' expectations. 'Bus usage will thrive when it is clearly a viable alternative to the car but with fares as high as they are and mainly under the control of the private sector bus operators as well as the operators determining the routes there is no level playing field.'



Left: The draft Bill proposes giving PTEs powers to direct local authorities to provide bus priorities in places like Wilmslow Road in Manchester where a Stagecoach Enviro400 and Trident are seen battling their way in and out of heavy car traffic.

Manchester considers bid for C-charge and public transport expansion

Councils in Greater Manchester may bid for £3billion of Transport Innovation Fund money to expand bus, tram and train services and introduce weekday peak period congestion charging for motorists on the busiest commuter roads.

The region's 10 councils are canvassing public opinion before

deciding whether to bid for TIF money in July. They insist that a scheme must obtain public and business community approval, that congestion charges would be applied more selectively than in London and only be introduced after the public transport system is upgraded to a 'reliable and integrated' standard.

Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority chair Roger Jones says this would mean 30km of new Metrolink tram track, new faster bus routes using 'hundreds of new, better buses' including yellow schoolbuses, as well as new trains, and faster, easier travel with new transport

interchanges, park-&-ride facilities, better travel information and ticketing. The Greater Manchester Bus Operators' Association, representing 96% of the conurbation's operators, says it will work in partnership with the PTA to create a workable plan for improved services.



Stagecoach moves into Somerset with Cooks acquisition

Stagecoach UK Bus increased its presence in the West Country on 1 May by acquiring Wellington, Somerset-based Cooks Coaches from Paul Landymores's Landylines for an undisclosed sum.

Stagecoach has acquired Cooks' fleet of approximately 60 buses and 120 staff, along with its purpose-built modern garage, workshop and head office at Greenham Business Park, operating centres in Chard, Exeter, Honiton and Tiverton, some smaller outstations and all contracts, which include park-&-ride services in Exeter and Taunton, all-day urban and interurban and weekly rural services.

Stagecoach Devon, which has expanded into North Devon over the past year, has a Somerset base in Yeovil and overlaps with Cooks' routes in Exeter, Crediton, Tiverton, Ottery St Mary, Honiton, Sidmouth and Seaton. However, Cooks will be run as a distinct operation, in the immediate term under the management of the group's service performance director, Bob Montgomery, a widely experienced senior manager whose past career has included top posts at First Glasgow, Dublin Bus, Mainline, Bee Line Buzz in Manchester and North Devon.



Above: Cooks Coaches Optare Solo YJ06 FYX in Taunton, where First is the resident big group operator. STEVE MASKELL

'Stagecoach was approached by the company's owners, who offered it for sale,' says a group spokesman. 'We looked at the business, believe it is strong and has good potential for the future. Moving forward, the fleet will be branded Stagecoach, although this will be done over a period of time

rather than overnight. The company is very well run and we have retained the core management team.'

Set up by Ian and Jill Cook in May 1980, Cooks has grown considerably under the control of Landylines since November 1997. It operates numerous bus

service and school contracts for Devon, Somerset and Dorset County Councils as well as some for local businesses and schools. The fleet includes 25 Optare Solos, a private hire fleet of mainly 16-33 seat Mercedes-Benz coaches and one full-size Dennis Javelin coach.

Inter-group competition escalates as First says it turns the corner

Competition between Stagecoach and First is escalating in Devon, with both groups launching new commercial services in each other's dominant parts of the county.

Stagecoach Devon has enhanced its commercial services between Barnstaple and Bideford to every 20min Monday-Saturday with an hourly evening service, and a range of Fare Buster offers including a £2 single and £3 return on the 20-mile Combe Martin-Barnstaple route.

First Devon & Cornwall is increasing its service between the two towns from every 15min to every 10min from 18 June, when it is also doubling its service between Torquay and Paignton to every 15min Monday-Saturday. Stagecoach operates between eight and 12 buses an hour on this route.

Three weeks earlier, First increased its Torquay-Paignton-Plymouth X80 through service to half-hourly for the summer, prompting Stagecoach to launch a new Paignton-Totnes-Plymouth X45 from 2 July, which

will operate hourly Monday-Saturday using low-floor Tridents.

These developments come as First says its Devon & Cornwall company has turned the corner financially and operationally, after a period of annual trading losses and poor service reliability.

'The financial performance of the company dramatically improved in the first half of 2006/07 and trading in the second half of the year started well and was in line with our expectations,' says managing director Marc Reddy.

'Our current strong trading performance has been achieved thanks to the hard work and commitment shown by my new management team and all of our staff. The successful partnerships with our local transport authorities have also played a key role in getting us to where we are today.' Around the Plymouth area, he says First carried 31.8% more passengers last November than in the same month in 2005, 25.5% extra passengers being pensioners travelling free.

Citylink JV may appeal sale ruling

The Stagecoach/Scottish Citylink joint venture may launch a formal appeal against the Competition Commission's ruling that it should sell half of its services on the Glasgow-Aberdeen and Edinburgh-Inverness routes.

Announcing its final decision, the Commission says it sees no reason to change its view that coach passengers on these routes would benefit the most from the restoration of competition. 'Before the joint venture, vigorous competition between Scottish Citylink and Stagecoach's Megabus service had brought substantial improvements to fares and service quality on these routes,' says chairman John Baillie. 'We think that passengers should be able to continue enjoying these benefits, which an absence of competition would remove.'

The two operators only competed for 13 months from August 2004 until the joint venture was created, owned 65% by Citylink parent ComfortDelGro, 35% by Stagecoach. Before then, Citylink enjoyed a near monopoly and the 13-month

battle saw both operators lose substantial revenue.

A letter from Commission chief executive Martin Stanley to Scottish MPs and members of the Scottish Parliament hints that its hard line may be meant to teach the bus industry that it should obtain Office of Fair Trading clearance before merging businesses.

'I understand that the operations of the two businesses were integrated soon after the transaction was completed and the new timetable was registered within a week of the implementation of the joint venture and before the OFT started its investigation,' he says. 'In proceeding in this way, the companies took a considerable risk.'

■ The joint venture extended Megabus services to Sunderland and Middlesbrough from 21 May, with one service a day each way via Leeds and Sheffield to London, introduced ahead of the Grand Central rail company's direct train services between London, Teesside and Sunderland.

13 years on: Arriva poised to take over in Darlington

Nearly 13 years after the Monopolies & Mergers Commission criticised its tactics in moving into the town as 'predatory, deplorable and against the public interest', Stagecoach has agreed a deal to sell its Darlington services to Arriva North East.

The agreement, which is conditional on Office of Fair Trading approval without a reference to the Competition

Commission, envisages all Stagecoach services being taken over by Arriva, along with its 78 staff. Arriva will sell its town centre depot at Feethams for redevelopment and move into the Stagecoach depot at Faverdale. Stagecoach currently has a peak requirement of 24 buses, met by an allocation of 28 step-entrance Dennis Darts — a clear sign that this is certainly not one of the

group's best performing urban businesses.

If it goes through, the takeover will end head-to-head bus competition that has existed in Darlington since 1986, when United (Arriva's predecessor) launched 60 minibuses into a three-year battle with council-owned Darlington Transport.

Hostilities recommenced in 1993 when two former United managers set up Your Bus in competition with both companies, prompting the council to offer its bus company for sale in July 1994. Stagecoach, Badgerline and United bid to buy it, but lost out to Yorkshire Traction, which was thought to be working on behalf of either Your Bus or United.

Stagecoach had already registered a 20-bus, four-route network due to start in the town in

December 1994 and was the Transport & General Workers Union's favoured bidder. Rather than wait for the original start date, it registered all of Darlington Transport's network, drafted in 48 buses and started running free services from 7 November.

Yorkshire Traction withdrew its takeover offer and Darlington Transport went into administration three days after Stagecoach started its free services. Stagecoach bought the Darlington Transport depot from the administrators in 1995, selling it at a profit for redevelopment.

In Christian Wolmar's book on Stagecoach, published in 1998, group chief executive Brian Souter admitted that, in Darlington, the 'PR damage by far and away offset any benefit that the deal brought us'.



Left: Arriva North East Optare MetroRiders and an Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Dart of Stagecoach North East on Darlington town services in May. **STEVEN HODGSON**

Rivals square up for clash in Preston

Stagecoach has sparked off a battle for business in Preston by registering two high-frequency midibus routes in the city from 24/25 June, using new Optare Solos.

The routes, to be branded Preston Citi Network, replicate employee-owned Preston Bus services 11 (Bus Station-Gamull Lane via Ribbleton Avenue) and 16 (Bus Station-Farrington Park via New Hall Lane) and will use the same route numbers. Stagecoach's 11 will run every 10min on Mondays to Saturdays, half-hourly on Sundays and bank holidays, while its 16 will run at frequent intervals on Mondays to Saturdays only. Preston Bus

operates a 5min frequency over both routes.

Preston Bus has applied to increase its operator licence authorisation and has registered its own versions of Stagecoach services 2/A (Longridge-Preston-New Longton/Southport) and 3A (Preston-Longridge) starting on 9 July. Managing director Peter Bell says: 'In other parts of Lancashire, like Lancaster, there is a monopoly held by Stagecoach and that has given people a lesser service because other independent operators are driven out. We will not let that kind of thing happen here in Preston, we are ready for the fight, we have done it before and we can do it again.'



Above: Preston Bus is increasing its fleet of Optare Solos to step up services over Stagecoach routes. Solo 55 (PE51 YHK) has recently been repainted into its current livery. **GARY CONN**

Transdev says Blackburn fleet needed 'cool and spirited' relaunch

Transdev says it needed to create a 'modern, cool, spirited and confident' image to replace the 'old, fusty, tired and turned off' appearance of Blackburn Transport, the council-owned

company that the French group acquired in January and relaunched with a new fleet in May.

Stuart Wilde, managing director of Transdev's Blazefield businesses in Lancashire and Yorkshire, says

the green/cream/yellow local identity had to go as part of a plan to modernise and simplify its East Lancashire network. It has invested £3.75million in 25 Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs, which carry a new Spot On livery of white, purple and coffee, created by Ray Stenning's Best Impressions consultancy, which eventually will replace both the Blackburn and Lancashire United identities.

Transdev's target is for its Lancashire services to be operated entirely with low-floor buses within one rather than three years, as originally intended, and for

passenger numbers to rise by 5%. 'It has to be from gridlock to wedlock in the battle for modal shift,' says Stuart Wilde, who describes the new buses as 'our weapons of mass seduction'.

They are being used initially on high-frequency Hyndburn Circular routes, linking Accrington, Blackburn and Great Harwood, followed by those between Accrington, Blackburn and Darwen. Interurban services 152 (Burnley-Blackburn-Preston) and 225 (Clitheroe-Blackburn-Bolton) will retain Lancashire United branding.



Left: Spot On-branded Volvo 1824 (YJ07 PBV) operating Hyndburn Circular service 6. **STEWART J. BROWN**



Alexander Dennis buys Plaxton to reunite TransBus family

In one of the year's biggest surprises so far, Alexander Dennis announced its acquisition of Plaxton Holdings on 14 May, reuniting the bus and coach manufacturers previously in common ownership as part of TransBus International between August 2000 and May 2004.

The deal, for an undisclosed sum, creates a £250million turnover business with 1,900 employees, 1,400 at Alexander Dennis (900 at its Falkirk body plant, 300 at the Dennis chassis plant in Guildford and 200 in its aftermarket activities) and 500 at Plaxton's facilities in Scarborough and Anston. It was announced only three weeks after Plaxton celebrated its centenary and exactly a month after new Alexander Dennis chief executive Colin Robertson joined the company from American construction plant manufacturer Terex.

Robertson, whose engineering pedigree is also expected to inject fresh vigour into the Dennis side of the business, had already pledged to at least double the size of Alexander Dennis within five years. 'To stay at the forefront in the UK, while also creating a platform for growth internationally, requires a business with scale, purchasing power, unique skill sets and innovative products that can be woven into a powerful product line-up, both at home and abroad. It also needs shareholders who are prepared to invest in the future,' he says.

'This deal has all of these ingredients, bringing together three great brands with terrific recent histories. Alexander Dennis is currently outright market leader in the British bus sector — and has a worldwide reputation for double deck bus products — while Plaxton is by

far and away the UK's most outstanding coach builder. Like Alexander Dennis, it has experienced a remarkable turnaround in the past three years and re-established itself at the forefront of the industry.

'We have taken an important step, bringing together two companies with complementary products and remarkable synergies. The dexterity this provides will enable us to bring a new dimension to customer relationships and to enthuse the marketplace with the realisation that the British bus and coach manufacturing sector is in good shape and ready to take on new challenges.'

The reference to 'three great brands' is significant, reinforcing that the intention is for Plaxton to retain its identity and autonomy, and that although most Alexander Dennis products are sold by that joint name, chassis supplied to third party bodybuilders like MCV and East Lancs are branded simply as Dennis.

Plaxton chairman Brian Davidson, who joined Alexander from Scottish Aviation before TransBus brought Plaxton into the business, says: 'This is a positive step for both companies. It brings together like-minded people who know the British bus and coach business inside out, and who are enthusiastic about taking both of these businesses to a new level.



Above: Recent Plaxton bus deliveries include two Centro-bodied VDL SB120s to Bluebird of Middleton. This is 81 (KK07 BLU). **MARK HALDON**

'At Plaxton, we pride ourselves in having a strong management team, a committed workforce and a reputation for quality products. All of these factors will remain intact, with the added bonus that we are now aligned to a successful, financially sound business that is prepared to invest and to accelerate our forward plans. The move will enable us to raise our sights beyond the immediate horizon and view a broader canvas of opportunity.'

He now succeeds Ian Moore as Dennis managing director, while with co-directors Mike Keaney, Kevin Wood and Julie Globe stay at Plaxton, which they rescued from the collapse of TransBus in May 2004, shortly before a consortium of Scottish business interests (including Stagecoach founders Brian Souter and Ann Gloag) set up Alexander Dennis to acquire the remainder of the business.

This year's takeover is likely to accelerate Plaxton's plans to

update and expand its coach range, which although greatly improved in quality and one of the lightest on the market, is largely unchanged since the stainless steel Panther and Paragon were introduced for the 2000 season. The lack of a product with a

perceived 'wow factor' is believed to have been a factor in turning National Express away from Plaxton to standardise on the Caetano Levante.

Alexander Dennis insists that this deal will avoid the course of events that not only saw TransBus collapse within four years, but also kill off its constituent brands and transfer Plaxton's bus production to Falkirk.

It says that the collapse of TransBus and majority owner Mayflower followed Mayflower's £265million takeover of Dennis, a price generally accepted to have been excessive. As a major manufacturer of truck cabs, Mayflower was hit badly by the downturn in the North American market following the September 2001 terrorist attacks, and also was involved in other expensive business ventures. It believes that there is little overlap between the Plaxton and Alexander Dennis bus body ranges, which typically sell to different customer bases — Plaxton more to smaller operators, Alexander Dennis more to larger fleets.

Indeed, Plaxton currently builds no products on Alexander Dennis chassis. The Centro bus body is built on Volvo, VDL Bus and MAN chassis, the Primo midibus is built on a frame manufactured in Hungary by Enterprise Bus (a currently independent company created out of the TransBus collapse) and its large coaches are built on Volvo, Irisbus and MAN chassis. It has recently completed a final batch of Profile bodies on Euro3-engined Dennis Javelin chassis, the last coaches produced at Guildford pending a decision on whether to produce a Euro4 coach.



Left: One of the Plaxton Profile-bodied Euro3 Dennis Javelins built recently at Scarborough.

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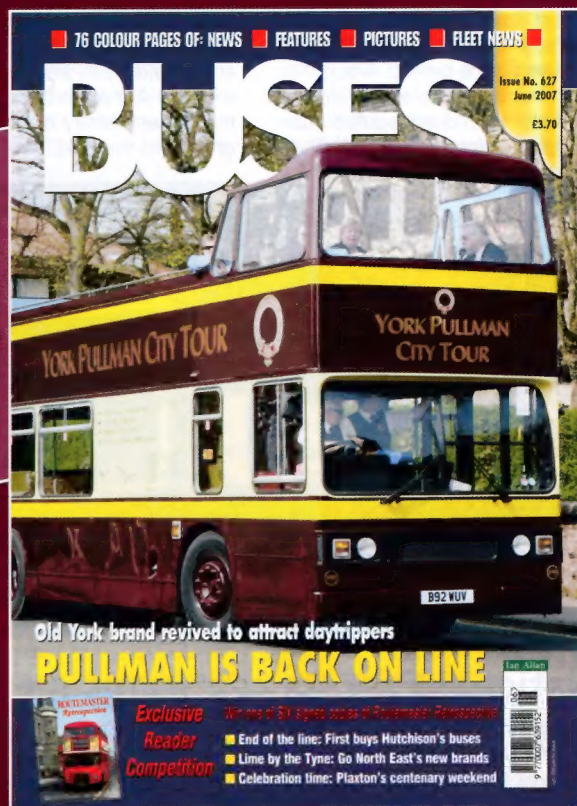
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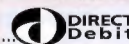
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Big Bus Company forms Arab joint venture for global expansion

The Big Bus Company, London's largest open-top sightseeing bus operator, has formed a joint venture with a United Arab Emirates business to develop sightseeing and scheduled bus services around the world.

Big Bus, owned by the Maybury family and founded in 1991 with two buses, has a 30% shareholding in the joint venture with the Al Fahim Group, one of the largest family business groups in the UAE, which

already has travel, tourism and automotive industry interests. The joint venture incorporates the existing Big Bus operations in London, where it has over 70 double-deckers, eight buses in Dubai, UAE where it has operated since 2002, and Philadelphia in the United States where it started in 2003.

The joint venture is among 17 companies shortlisted to provide an enhanced scheduled bus service in Abu Dhabi (see Global News, p19) and wants to expand its sightseeing services worldwide. Richard Maybury, who chairs the new company,

says: 'As a result of this investment, I expect to see the Big Bus brand developing significantly over the next five years leading to a rapid expansion of the business.'

Big Bus Tours International chief executive is Pat Waterman, who led the management buyout of London Coaches from London Buses in May 1992. He says: 'The partnership with the Al Fahim Group creates the exciting prospect of Big Bus operations in a number of other well-known cities.' Among these, Hong Kong is believed to be a high priority.



Left: Big Bus Company Leyland Titan VLT 125, with cabriolet-style folding sunroof, at St Paul's Cathedral. **MARK LYONS**

National Express reinstates its Skyliners, but orders giant Levantes

National Express has cleared the fleet of Neoplan Skyliner double-deck coaches to return to its Penzance-London-Aberdeen services for the first time since one overturned on the M25 in January, killing two passengers.

It instructed Trathens of Plymouth, owned by Park's of Hamilton, to take the remaining 11 vehicles out of service pending investigations into the accident, but sanctioned their return to use during the week beginning 21 May. The coaches were all new last year. 'Following our internal investigation, we have identified no safety issues relating to the double deck coaches operating on our network. Therefore the coaches are being reintroduced into service,' says the company.

'As the police investigation [into the accident] is still ongoing, we cannot make any further comment at this time.'

However, the long-term future of double-deckers on NatEx work has been cast in doubt by orders announced for 120 tri-axle single-deck coaches for contractors in 2007, 2008 and 2009. The entire order, for 40 coaches a year, has been placed with Scania and follows Stagecoach's recent move to 15m 65-seat Volvo single-deckers on its Megabus network by specifying tri-axle K-series vehicles with a 60-seat stretched version of the wheelchair accessible Caetano Levante body.

■ **Travel West Midlands bus order, see p56.**



Above: Trathens Neoplan Skyliner LSK 821 back in service in late-May on a National Express working from Devon to London. **KEITH MCGILLIVRAY**

Wrightbus unveils Eclipse SchoolRun for Ulsterbus

Wrightbus has begun delivering the first of 110 wheelchair accessible schoolbuses to Ulsterbus.

The Eclipse SchoolRun body, built on a straight frame Volvo B7R coach chassis, is a simplified version of the low-entry Eclipse Commuter of which so far only four have been built for Ulsterbus, Stagecoach and for demonstration. As supplied to Ulsterbus, it has a flat floor, narrow entrance ahead of the front axle for able-bodied passengers and a cassette

wheelchair lift and hinged door directly behind the front wheel.

In fully seated format, it holds 66 children generally in 3+2 formation, but with a 2+2 front row and a rear bench for five. All places have three-point seatbelts. Four front seats come out to accommodate a wheelchair. The prototype was shown at the Album local bus managers' conference near Warrington in May.

Pictures by **STEPHEN MORRIS**



Go North East evaluates StreetCar on Gateshead shuttle

The first Wright StreetCar rapid transit bus to operate with anyone other than FirstGroup began two weeks' trial on Go North East's

X66 Gateshead-MetroCentre CentreLink shuttle on 31 May. The white StreetCar, on a modified Volvo B7LA chassis, is

the last of First's initial order for 39 introduced over the past year to its 'ftr'-branded routes 4 in York and Leeds. Specially trained Go North East drivers operated it alongside Wright Solar Fusion-bodied articulated Scania's on the CentreLink route. For the trial, street conductors at either end of the non-stop service sold tickets before passengers boarded the StreetCar.

'This is an exciting new development and we are very grateful to FirstGroup chief executive Moir Lockhead for allowing us to try the vehicle out

before it goes into service with them,' says Go North East managing director Peter Huntley. 'Jointly with Nexus [the Tyne & Wear PTE], we will be undertaking research to determine whether StreetCars should feature in our plans for public transport improvements in Gateshead.' Nexus director general Bernard Garner says: 'We're keen to take this very good service to the next level, and selling tickets off-vehicle at bus stations to speed journey times further and testing new vehicles are both positive developments.'



Left: StreetCar YN07 SYJ, carrying temporary Go North East fleet number 9171, on trial on the X66 CentreLink. **GARY MITCHELHILL**

New administration wants guided buses instead of Edinburgh trams

The newly elected Scottish National Party minority administration in the Scottish Parliament wants to axe Edinburgh's proposed new tram system and invest in guided buses and other enhancements to the city's bus network.

The SNP executive wants to save £1.1billion by scrapping the

£592million tram project, due to open in 2010 and on which preliminary work has begun, along with a rail link to Edinburgh Airport. First minister Alex Salmond says the new administration favours guided busways in place of the off-street sections of the tramway as well as incentives for the use of hybrid propulsion, improved

ticketing, real-time information at all bus stops and more park-&-ride sites. 'We believe these measures offer a real alternative to the current tram proposal,' he says. It also wants to spend £4million a year improving the Edinburgh bus system.

Public opposition to the cost and disruption caused by building the tramway is believed to have helped new cabinet secretary Kenny MacAskill win the Edinburgh East & Musselburgh seat for the SNP. However, political opponents have seized on statements he made seven years ago when he opposed

plans for CERT (City of Edinburgh Rapid Transit), a guided busway between the city centre and Edinburgh Airport.

'Edinburgh seems to be the only place daft enough to go down this route,' he said then. 'What we are being asked to do is spend a lot of money on a fancy bus that runs on an ugly bit of concrete. Let's bin it and concentrate on more realistic solutions such as tramways and investment in rail links.' Putting those comments in his past, he says now: 'Things have changed. Times have moved on. It's horses for courses.'

Below: The SNP's Kenny MacAskill advancing his pro-bus, anti-tram message in Edinburgh during the Scottish election campaign. **BOB MCGILLIVRAY**



New artics specified for London

The first new articulated buses for London in over two years are due in service next year when the contract for 24hr service 453/N453 (Marylebone-Deptford) changes hands. Go-Ahead-owned London General is taking over the service from current operator Selkent, part of

Macquarie Bank-owned East London Bus Group, in February. TfL has specified new artics for the route, with a peak requirement of 23 vehicles, to replace the 26 Mercedes-Benz Citaros at Selkent's Plumstead garage; they will be five years old when the contract changes.



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£24million landmark interchange opens in Barnsley

South Yorkshire PTE opened its £24.5million new showpiece Barnsley bus and rail interchange on 20 May.

The 24hr interchange, with 24 nose-in departure bays for buses and coaches, is the first part of a £235million town centre redevelopment. Rather than build a utilitarian bus station next to the railway station, the PTE commissioned the Jefferson Sheard architecture practice to produce a building it says stands comparison with the new Eurostar rail terminal at London St Pancras. It is well lit by natural light, partly finished in local stone and uses pastel green ceiling colours to help emphasise the environmental benefits of public transport.

SYPT director general Roy Wicks says: 'The new interchange is not only a gateway to the town centre and a hub of all local public transport, but also a spectacular and innovative structure. Already it is being recognised as a world class building and is being considered for national and international architectural awards.'

'Within the interchange, there are beautiful structural beams made from sustainable sourced timber and a vast glass east wall

that, together with the innovative roofing material, ensures it will become a Yorkshire landmark. The roof is made of a highly translucent plastic, which protects visitors from poor weather and from excessively strong sunlight while still ensuring that they have the feeling of being in the open air.

'It will be a safe, clean, modern environment for all bus and rail passengers as it connects the railway station directly with the town centre via a new link bridge. It has been designed to cater for the needs of all passengers with escalators, lifts and ramps. I hope people of Barnsley will be as excited by their new interchange as I am and that it will encourage even more of them to use public transport.'

Work has begun on dismantling the temporary bus station on the opposite side of the rail tracks to make way for an 80-car park-&-ride facility due to open in the autumn.

■ Construction has begun on the 400-vehicle North park-&-ride car park, the first of the two sites in the £15.3million cross-town A638 quality bus corridor in Doncaster developed in partnership between SYPT, Doncaster Council and local bus operators.



First introduces its first Euro4 Eclipse Geminis

FirstGroup has begun operating the first Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B9TL double-deckers in its South Yorkshire and Glasgow fleets, with more following for Manchester.

The 10.4m Wright-bodied B9TL, with Euro4 Volvo engine requiring AdBlue fuel re-agent, has a shorter wheelbase than First's Euro3 B7TL Geminis. The rear end is redesigned with styling cues from Wright's StreetCar rapid transit bus.

Although two exhibited at Euro Bus Expo in Birmingham last November had non-opening upper deck emergency exits, conventional hinged units have been fitted for production.

The first 20 for South Yorkshire, worth £3.4million, have upgraded the X78 interurban service connecting Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster. Some for Manchester have leather rather than moquette seating.



Left and above: Front and rear views of X78-branded First South Yorkshire Eclipse Gemini 37257 (YN07 MKX) and First Glasgow 37191 (SF07 FCG). They have separate diesel and AdBlue fillers behind the driver's cab and a short bay ahead of the rear axle. **STEPHEN WHITELEY/PHIL HALEWOOD**



TGM buys Wiltax for £35,000

Tellings-Golden Miller has returned to operating buses in Surrey by paying £35,000 for New Haw-based Wiltax Buses, which will retain its identity and management.

The deal was agreed on 4 June, the same day as Wiltax took over part of Rotala's Surrey Connect business (see Fleet News, p56), and brings a fleet of 24 vehicles (14 double-deck and four single-deck buses plus seven coaches) operated primarily on school transport contracts, rail replacements as well as tendered public bus services. Among the routes Wiltax has taken over from Surrey Connect is the 400 (Shepperton-Staines), which incorporates one of the original pre-deregulation Golden Miller Coaches routes; Travel London, the former TGM bus business sold to National Express Group in 2005, has taken over the remainder of Surrey Connect's services.

TGM is renaming the actual Wiltax Buses company, which made a £38,382 net profit in 2005/06, as Randomquick (once the shelf name of Alder Valley South) and will run it as a separate trading arm of Tellings-Golden Miller Coaches.

Eastern Counties Routemasters return to summer service

First Eastern Counties is again operating its three former London Routemasters hourly on weekdays on Great Yarmouth seafront route 3 (Hemsby Beach-Seashore Holiday Park) until 31 August, except on 27/28 June when they will help provide special service 100 between Norwich Rail Station and the Royal Norfolk Showground.

As it requires additional vehicles during the summer peak, First says it makes sense to use fully depreciated buses with a saleable novelty factor. This is particularly relevant on Great Yarmouth seafront where it faces competition from two conventional bus operators, a City Sightseeing open-topper, two Dotto roadtrains

and several horse-drawn Landau carriages.

The three buses, all acquired from First Glasgow in 2005/06, wear liveries representing the three operators in Great Yarmouth that combined to form the present First operation. RML2480 is red with gold Eastern Counties fleetnames, RML2717 sports blue and cream for Great Yarmouth Transport and RML2623 represents Halesworth Transit, which traded as Flying Banana, and is named *Fruitmaster*. Its green and yellow colours are similar to those of Norwich City Football Club, and it has attracted hire requests from football fans. Details of the routes are on the www.firstgroup.com website.

RML2717 on its first day in service this year, 29 May.

GRAHAME BESSEY



Below: *Fruitmaster* RML2623 on loan to Blue Triangle last October for one of its Sunday heritage services, running appropriately to Easton Lodge Halt, Bacon End Banana Depot. RUSSELL YOUNG



New dawn for Sunset Coaches

Western Greyhound is expanding farther into Western Cornwall on 17 June to acquire Sunset Coaches, based at Sancreed near Penzance, upon the retirement of owner Ian Topping.

All Sunset staff are transferring to Western Greyhound, which also takes over its seven Cornwall County Council tendered services in the extreme west of the county. These include town services in Penzance and Hayle, and a Penzance-Lands End-St Just route, and all timetables and route numbers will remain unaltered through the summer. Sunset offered off-peak single fares, but

Western Greyhound will introduce day returns and extend availability of its Day Explorer tickets, which also are valid on Stagecoach Devon routes.

Two Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios are being taken over and repainted in Western Greyhound's green and white livery, but existing Varios will replace the five older Mercedes minibuses at the takeover. The new owner is also investing in new destination blinds, introducing electronic ticket machines, two-way radios and staff uniforms.

Right: One of the Sunset vehicles due to be replaced, TBP-converted Mercedes-Benz 611D N209 ONL, operating the 'Bay2Bay' service 340 between Penzance, Marazion, Relubbus and Hayle.

CHRISTOPHER CARTER



IN BRIEF

Centrebus has acquired Bowers Coaches of Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire, adding 25 vehicles to its fleet of over 100 spread between Grantham, Leicester and the Hertfordshire/Bedfordshire borders.

GHA Coaches has taken over 18-vehicle Bryn Melyn Motor Services, but will retain its separate identity.

Highland Country has reversed its decision to cancel an order for four East Lancs Olympus-bodied Volvo B9TL double-deckers. The original vehicles will go to Inverness and not Ireland as had been expected following the loss of funding for these first double-deckers the company has bought for over 20 years.



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James Freeman joins Reading Transport as managing director

Stagecoach East managing director **James Freeman** (pictured) is leaving the group after six years to become MD of council-owned Reading Transport, where he succeeds **Colin Thompson**, who left last December.

James Freeman (50) joined Stagecoach from Travel West Midlands in 2001 as South Midlands operations director, becoming Warwickshire MD when South Midlands was split in 2004. He became Stagecoach East (previously United Counties) MD the next year, succeeding **Inglis Lyon**, when he became Highlands & Islands Airports MD, and is the first Stagecoach MD to leave in mid-career since then.

An enthusiast and supporter of Friends of King Alfred Buses, he began his career in 1978 as a National Bus Company senior management trainee and was the first managing director of People's Provincial, one of two NBC companies sold to its employees. He later became MD of Badgerline's rapid transit development business, remaining for a time after First subsumed Badgerline.



Bob Dorr heads First Essex

First Essex operations director **Bob Dorr** has become managing director of the company, which he joined in January 2006.

Ops director for First Potteries

First Potteries has promoted its Birkenhead-based operations manager (North West), **Peter Walch** (pictured), to operations director, taking over some responsibilities from commercial director **Paul De Santis**. He joined the industry nearly 20 years ago as a bus driver and more recently was operations manager at First Manchester's Bury depot.



New Scottish transport minister named

Following the Scottish Parliament elections, Scottish National Party MSP **Stewart Stevenson** (left) has become Scotland's minister for transport, infrastructure and climate change, succeeding Liberal Democrat **Tavish Scott** (right).



Adrienne Fuller swaps Corgi for Bulldog

Adrienne Fuller, one of several key people recently made redundant by Corgi Classics, has joined Oxford Diecast, the models manufacturer developed out of Corgi's former manufacturing division. The daughter of a member of the old Mettoy models team, she spent 16 years with Corgi in a role that included product manager for its Original Omnibus Company 1:76-scale range. Although it does not currently produce model buses for serious collectors, Oxford Diecast plans to compete in all market sectors and Adrienne Fuller's initial responsibility is to develop a new range of products codenamed Bulldog, due early next year.

David Howard, Cavendish MD, dies at 62

David Howard, the former Isle of Man Transport director of public transport who returned to Eastbourne last March as managing director of Cavendish Motor Services, died on 14 May aged 62 following a severe heart attack. His career began with Alder Valley, which he left to become traffic manager at Northampton Transport. After managing the Tyne & Wear Metro, he succeeded Roger Bowker as Eastbourne Buses MD in 1988. He founded Cavendish, competing against Eastbourne Buses with a Southdown-inspired livery, in a venture with Renown Coaches of Bexhill.

Paul Tappin, leading coach operator

Paul Tappin, until recently managing director of Didcot-based Tappins Coaches, died from cancer on 18 May, age 60. He worked for the 60-year-old family business for 40 years and was a prominent coach operator whose eagerness to learn from others prompted him to lead several operators' overseas study tours. Earlier this year, ownership of Tappins passed to Heyfordian Travel, although it retains its separate identity and the family still owns the Oxford City Sightseeing business.

Eamon McArthur 1951-2006

Irish photographer and preservationist

Friends and enthusiasts in Ireland and beyond are mourning the sudden death at 56 of **Eamon McArthur**, one of our regular photographic contributors, on 18 May.

He had a lifelong interest in buses and in recent years was the Republic of Ireland correspondent for the PSV Circle, but although initially a close follower of buses in Ireland, and especially Dublin, he developed a keen interest in London Transport during the 1970s and made frequent visits to the UK capital to pursue his hobby. It helped that his late cousin Roger was an LT driver.



During the 1980s, his increasingly close interest in the Coras Iompair Éireann fleet led him, with other enthusiasts, to assist Frank Trainor with the transfer by road of withdrawn Leyland Atlanteans from temporary storage at Spa Road to Castlewellan, Co. Down. These included many former Cork City examples. In 1986, he acquired for preservation former Inchicore Railway Works staff bus R913, a Leyland Titan PD3A/6 created out of Tiger coach running units. He oversaw its restoration and exhibited it at many rallies and meetings over the next 10 or more years, before selling it to another enthusiast in 2000.

Eamon's particular fascinations were traditional canvas destination blinds and traffic allocation 'running board' details, of which he had a truly encyclopaedic knowledge. By his reckoning, modern electronic destination displays could not hold the same interest, despite their immense practical flexibility.

Readers may not realise for how long Eamon contributed photographs to our pages, as he attributed his earlier work to one 'Christina Curtis', which was his wife Tina's maiden name. As most



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women are deemed too sensible to develop a passion for bus photography, the mysterious Christina intrigued many readers, although 'her' cover was compromised in the *Buses* editorial office when another Irish enthusiast confessed to having taken a near identical shot to a published picture and recalled no demure damsel totting a camera. Only one large, definitely masculine, male.

Eamon especially relished capturing on film what he termed 'odd men out' — buses deviating from their usual haunts or surroundings.

It was fitting, therefore, that his final picture, taken two days before he died, was of Dublin Bus Volvo B6BLE midibus WV31 working an evening peak duty on double-deck route 16.

'Eamon was a highly intelligent man with an easy sense of sharp wit,' says *Buses* Fleet News Ireland editor Ian Molloy. 'He rarely resisted an opportunity for well meant harmless mischief and could effortlessly strike up a meaningful conversation with a complete stranger. People took to him because he was so straightforward and

could relate so effectively, even though he would express his views clearly, often without reference to political correctness. He did not seem to care and people truly respected him for that.'

Eamon and Tina had four children and a grandchild, Luke, of whom he was especially proud. His main working career was in the Guinness brewery at St James's Gate, Dublin but after retiring in December 2003, he often drove part-time for private bus operators, including Bus Éireann sub-contractor Ronnie Bruen and the Dublin Airport car park shuttle operations of Aircoach.



Left: From the days 10 years ago of his photographic alter ego, Christina Curtis, we publish this picture as a tribute to Eamon McArthur, showing then new Dublin Bus Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Volvo Olympian RV326 (97 D 326).



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London Bus Magazine

(no. 139) includes a major articles entitled *Green Line – the last 35 years (part 1)*, *undo The Number One*, *Rotherhithe Tunnel* and *Meanderings with Trolleybuses 1961 – 1962*, as well as the usual *Around & About* quarterly review and book reviews. Superbly illustrated, 60 pages, only £5.00 (£4.00 to members).



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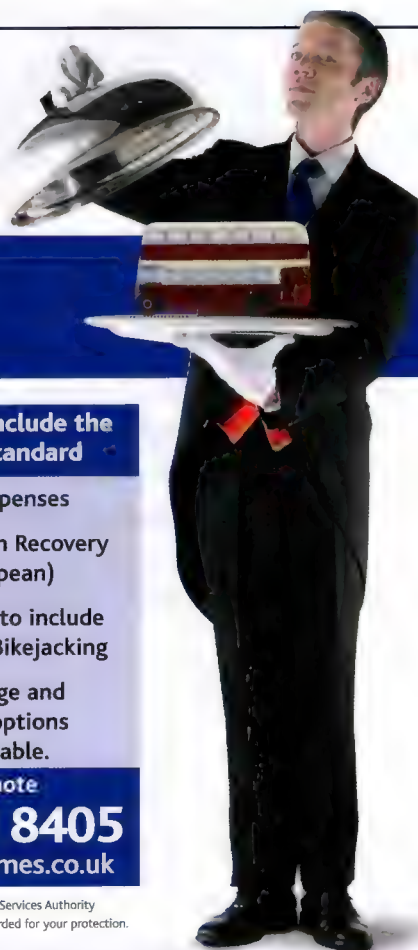
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Hope springs eternal in the busman's human breast

The Local Transport Bill offers a glimmer of hope that bus operation might function within a more enlightened framework than it does today, and that the UK might begin to adopt some of the successful solutions found in Europe

With apologies to Alexander Pope, but I do feel a glimmer of optimism on reading the draft Local Transport Bill and its accompanying consultation paper entitled *Strengthening Local Delivery*.

Why? I suppose because the Bill contains a couple of potentially useful extras compared to the content of last year's *Putting Passengers First* document and because there is a more specific appraisal of what the government plans to do about competition law and its generally malevolent impact on public transport and, more particularly, its passengers.

In addition, there is the proposal to allow the creation of Passenger Transport Authorities and Executives outside the metropolitan areas and this could prove useful in places where several adjoining county and district councils have a stake in a local bus network (and perhaps rail services, too) which criss-cross all their boundaries. One such area is the Blackwater Valley, close to where I live. Straddling a corner of Berkshire (actually one of its successor unitary authorities), two Hampshire district councils and one of Surrey's, this largely urban complex has considerable traffic congestion problems that reach gridlock proportions whenever either of the adjacent motorways (M3 and M4) is closed. A PTA with the ability to enforce greater priority for buses and plan on an integrated basis might well make a difference here. What the Germans might call Verkehrs Verbund Schwarzwassertal could yet appear on the area's bus stops in similar vein to my picture from Dresden.



While there are changes to the way in which a quality contract regime might be introduced, it would seem that the government has not yielded to calls from the Passenger Transport Executive Group, several of the PTAs and PTEs and numerous individual politicians in the areas they cover to return to pre-1986 regulation of the bus industry. In my view, it is right to avoid such an attempt to recreate history. The *ancien regime* really was not the perfect solution and had as many faults as the present situation, not least in terms of the failure to recognise that local authorities have to take tough action to ensure that buses have a 'track' on which to operate with minimal obstruction from general traffic.

It is this latter point that holds the key to a better structure and the consultation paper goes into some detail on the strengthening of partnerships between the public and private sectors, expanding on the proposal first mooted in *Putting Passengers First* of holding local authorities to account for their contribution to bus punctuality. It also outlines the proposed strengthening of the traffic commissioners' role and the new powers to be conferred upon the senior traffic commissioner, but the sanctions that these independent adjudicators might be able to apply to local authorities and found wanting in terms of their support, for example, for bus priority measures, remain unclear.

Moves towards integration

A welcome development is the replacement of the local transport plan process with one that will oblige PTAs and councils to produce an integrated transport strategy and to set out how it will be implemented. As I have said before, the closer this gets to the French *Plan des Déplacements Urbains* the better. Hopefully this idea will be developed in line with the emerging need for reductions in transport's share of climate-threatening emissions, and with the need for government expenditure to be prioritised on measures to reduce car use. I have no doubt that a lot more funding than the ring-fenced income from congestion charging or other road pricing will have to be made available by the Treasury as the seriousness of our American-style addiction to motoring everywhere sinks in, and the popular demand for better public transport takes hold.

Other aspects of the draft Bill, such as the ability for licensed private hire car companies to operate bus services on a limited basis, should be welcomed too, since this — and perhaps the proposed extension of the community transport sector's involvement in conventional service provision — might help to reduce the incidence of full-size vehicles running around carrying little more than fresh air in the more rural areas.

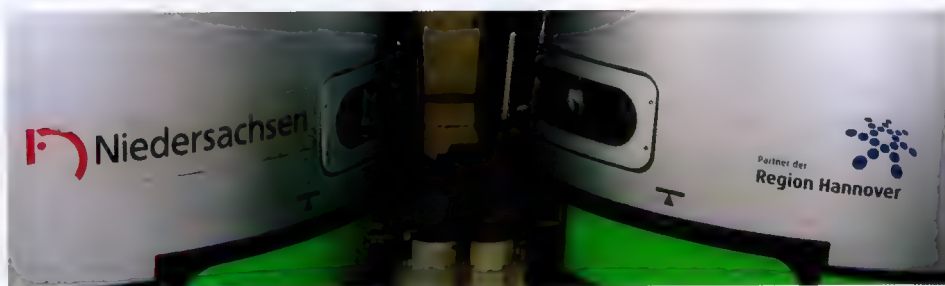
All in all, the draft Bill seems to contain a lot that could be of benefit in bringing the nation's bus services up to the standards exemplified by the best, building as it does on the successes in Brighton, Cambridge and Nottingham rather than seeking to follow a convenient political dogma by re-regulating the industry.

Nonsense on stilts

I fervently hope, however, that the curbing of the nonsense (nonsense on stilts, in fact) perpetrated by the Office of Fair Trading and the Competition Commission will be handled effectively. Buses are primarily in competition with the private car, not with other buses, and passengers desperately want the ability to buy one ticket that is available on all the services they might use, not just on one of them.

I hope, too, that a new dawn can be created for sensible involvement of local authorities and PTAs/PTEs with their private sector partners to imitate the success of the 'mixed economy' structure common in French cities and the traffic-and-tariff partnerships or Verkehrsverbunde that exist throughout Austria, Germany and Switzerland. In these three countries in particular, there has long been a belief that what matters is the creation of integrated public transport networks in which high quality, high frequency, totally reliable services with simple multi-modal ticketing ensure consistent passenger growth and reduced car use. The key to their success is a commonsense blend of the skills and duties of both public and private sectors without the animosity all too prevalent here in the UK in recent years.

Perhaps, in time, we will see the equivalent of 'Niedersachsen' and 'Partner der Region Hannover', as in my second picture, proudly displayed on Arriva, First, Go-Ahead, National Express, Stagecoach and Transdev buses throughout the UK.





First lays down European bridgehead with foray into Germany

FirstGroup has embarked on what could signal the start of expansion into mainland Europe with the acquisition of the family firm of Arthur Merl GmbH in the central south-western German state of Rhineland-Palatinate. The deal to take over the long-established company in the cathedral city of Speyer was completed on 30 April after several months of negotiation. Merl runs 130 buses and has around 200 employees.

The low-key purchase marks the first foray by Aberdeen-based First into the German transport market where rivals Arriva and French-owned Veolia and Transdev have already made significant inroads with their bus and rail interests. In a stock exchange announcement to mark the company's preliminary results for the year to 31 March, First chief executive Moir Lockhead says this 'modest investment' in Germany will enable the company to 'build a greater understanding of the market as it continues to liberate'.

Merl operates local bus services in Speyer, Ludwigshafen, Mannheim and Heidelberg as part of the area's integrated transport

network, the Verkehrsbund Rhein Neckar (VRN). The fleet includes schoolbuses and minibuses operated by subsidiaries Fröhlich and Clarissa Schultz Herxheim. Vehicles range from three Van Hool A308s to a solitary Mercedes-Benz Citaro, with older Mercedes O405 and O407 buses strongly represented. Most Merl buses wear a predominantly white livery with a contrasting red or blue stripe.

Former proprietor Arthur Merl (43) will stay on to run the company under First ownership. He says no immediate expansion is planned although Merl is currently competing for tenders, including several in Frankfurt am Main to the north, and he told *Buses* that the decision to sell the company founded in the 1970s had been difficult. 'Unfortunately I cannot secure the future of this operation on my own. The competition is growing and I need a strong partner.' In the past, he has criticised the problems created by the country's highly regulated public transport market.

First was virtually unknown in Germany until recently. Arriva boosted its German presence a



Above: A Merl Mercedes-Benz O405 in Ludwigshafen. JENS NABER

year ago by buying Bils, one of the largest privately-owned bus and coach operators in North Rhine-Westphalia. It also owns Sippel in the Rhine-Main area and has substantial rail interests. Veolia operates over 1,000 buses throughout Germany, primarily in the Rhine-Main area and Bavaria. It also took over the city network in the German city of Pforzheim on the edge of the Black Forest (Global News, October 2006) despite strong grassroots

opposition to privatisation. Transdev operates around 250 buses in Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia.

■ The United States Surface Transportation Board and Committee on Foreign Investment have cleared First's £1.9billion takeover bid for the Laidlaw schoolbus, city bus and Greyhound coach business, but the deal still awaits anti-trust (competition) clearance in the US and Canada.

Scania, MAN and Mercedes reveal hybrid plans

Scania, MAN and Mercedes-Benz are following Volvo, Wrightbus, Optare and Alexander Dennis with hybrid electric city buses.

Scania and MAN exhibited prototypes at the UITP transport congress in Helsinki in May. Scania's is a concept bus designed for ticketless operation, with a flat floor, wide doors, no front overhang and driving cab over the front wheels. While hybrids built so far for UK operation use diesel engines to charge batteries, Scania fuels its prototype with ethanol and instead of batteries uses supercapacitors, which it says are more robust.

Scania says hybrids produce at least 25% lower emissions; ethanol reduces carbon dioxide emissions by up to 90%. Twelve conventional ethanol buses with Scania's hybrid drive enter regular operation with Storstockholms Lokaltrafik, the Stockholm transport authority, in 2008/09.

MAN — which still wants to merge with Scania — also uses supercapacitors (12 roof-mounted modules) in its 11.95m Lion's City Hybrid, shown with a 191kW (260hp) ultra low emission D0836 six-cylinder vertical EEV diesel engine and two 75kW electric motors on the rear axle. It says

supercapacitors — or ultracaps — require less maintenance and are lighter than batteries, making this hybrid no heavier than a gas-driven bus. Trials with an earlier prototype in Nuremberg show 20 to 25% fuel savings.

Mercedes-Benz plans to unveil its prototype diesel-electric hybrid Citaro later this year, with production beginning in 2009. The system will be installed in an articulated Citaro G, driving the centre and rear axles using four liquid-cooled wheel hub motors.

Mercedes claims two-axle drive provides better traction.

Electrical power is stored in roof-mounted lithium-ion batteries. The power pack has an output of 170kW and weighs 450kg. The units are charged by the diesel engine and energy from recuperative braking. The hybrid is fitted with a 4.8litre OM924LA unit instead of the 12litre OM457hLA normally in the left-hand-drive artic. This develops maximum power of 160kW (218hp) and is 550kg lighter.

Mercedes says the hybrid Citaro is a logical step towards a fuel cell-powered urban bus of the future. It already has a suitable electrical drive unit and energy store in the form of batteries. In principle, fuel cells would simply replace the diesel engine.

■ The United States city of Seattle plans to buy between 122 and 500 more New Flyer hybrid articulated buses, taking its fleet up to 714, which it says would be the largest hybrid artic fleet 'in history'.

The Scania hybrid ethanol concept bus.



New trolleys and Scania diesels for former Stagecoach NZ ops

NZ Bus, the new owner of Stagecoach's New Zealand businesses, has ordered 61 new trolleybuses for Wellington and its first 150 Scania diesel buses, all with Designline bodywork.

The trolleybus order ends uncertainty over the country's sole surviving system and will replace 1981-86 Volvo B58s. Each NZ\$460,000 (£169,000) 49-seat low-floor trolleybus will have new electrical systems by Eletra of Brazil and use reconditioned electric motors from the Volvos. Two prototypes arrive in August, production examples following from February.

NZ Bus, owned by New Zealand-based Infratil, has signed a long-term funding contract with Greater Wellington Regional Council, which will provide a NZ\$4.5million (£1.65million) annual subsidy for the trolleybus system that carries 8million passengers a year.

The order for three-axle Scania — 50 a year from 2007 to 2009 — is a further break with Stagecoach's standardisation on MANs in Wellington and Auckland, where NZ Bus operates in addition to owning the GoBus fleet in Hamilton. It ordered 20 Euro5-engined Volvo B7RLEs late last year (Global News, January).

MAN follows Merc with jumbo artic

MAN has followed Mercedes-Benz in developing a prototype 20.45m four-axle articulated bus as a concept for rapid transit systems.

Like the Mercedes Citaro CapaCity, the Lion's City GXL — shown at the UITP congress in Helsinki — is billed as a less expensive and more manoeuvrable alternative to double-articulated buses. It combines the front section of the 18.75m Lion's City GL artic with a 14.7m rear section derived from the rigid Lion's City LL of similar length, which has proved

popular in Scandinavia. Like the three-axle LL, the rearmost axle on the GXL is an electro-hydraulic actively steered unit.

■ Göteborgs Spårvägar, serving the Swedish city of Gothenburg, is to increase its fleet of 24m bi-articulated Volvo 7500s from four to 11 by the autumn. ÖBB Postbus in Austria has introduced four Hess-bodied 25m Scania L94UB bus-and-passenger trailer combinations on its Schwaz-Innsbruck-Telfs route, with 88 seats and space for 65 standees.

Bi-artic boost for St Gallen trolleybus system

The VBSG municipality in the Swiss city of St Gallen has ordered 24 new trolleybuses, including seven Hess LightTram3 bi-artics, as part of a SFr70million (£29million) investment in its network.

Delivery of the bi-artics is scheduled for 2008/09, with the remaining vehicles — likely to be Hess Swisstrolley3s — arriving in 2008-11 for the three-route trolleybus system, which opened in 1950 and carries 63,000 passengers a day.

Although more expensive to buy and maintain, the council says trolleybuses are quieter and eco-friendlier than diesel-electric hybrids. The five-year investment also includes 30 new Euro5 MAN diesel buses, extensive overhead equipment renewal, a new ticketing system and a real-time passenger information system.

St Gallen has followed Geneva, Zurich and Lucerne in choosing the 24m three-section Swiss-built LightTram. The order also ends a

homegrown project by St Gallen to create a higher-capacity trolleybus by adding a low-floor third section at the back of a 15-year-old NAW/Hess/ABB artic. This so-called Megatrolley entered service in January 2006, but will remain unique. Elderly and disabled users complained that they were too far away from the driver to seek help when boarding or alighting.

The seven Hess bi-artics will be the first fully low-floor St Gallen trolleybuses, replacing nine Saurer/Hess/BBC artic trolleys new in 1984/85. The 17 new artics will gradually replace the same number of NAW/Hess/ABB vehicles bought in 1991/92, although two will remain in reserve.

■ The Connexxion buses on the Zuidtangent services between Haarlem and Schiphol in the Netherlands are articulated Van Hool AG300s and not double-articulated AGG300s (Global News, May).

New Conecto is Citaro by another name

Mercedes-Benz is ending production of its Turkish-built step-entrance Conecto C — popular in Turkey, Russia, Eastern Europe and as a schoolbus in France — this summer, replacing it with a low-floor model based closely on the

Citaro. The new rigid and articulated Conecto will also be built at the Hossdere plant in Turkey, but to Western European eyes it is a Citaro by another name, offered with Euro4 and, where permitted, Euro3 vertical engines and bonded glazing.

Double-deckers galore in Berlin vintage bus running day

German double-deckers were among the vintage buses in a running day in Berlin on 12 May, when Traditionbus Berlin — which operates a year-round service in the German capital — operated 15 preserved vehicles on BVG high frequency Metrobus service M45 between the Zoo and Spandau. It operated 10 of its own and five visiting vehicles, while others not licensed to carry passengers shadowed the route, on which BVG provided fewer vehicles than on a normal Saturday. Buses ran displaying route numbers 54, 54E and AS1, the numbers for trams and buses on this line until 1991.

Top: BVG 2556, a 1974 Büssing DE74 double-decker, reflected on a wet road surface during this occasionally rainswept running day. Pictures by PAUL McNAMARA

Right: Preserved BVG 237, a 1962 Büssing E2U single-decker, alongside a U-Bahn railway station.



Big Bus and Veolia bid for Abu Dhabi bus network

The newly created Al Fahim & Big Bus Company Partnership and Veolia Transport are among 17 companies competing to win contracts to operate new higher quality bus services in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi by the end of this year.

The Anglo-Dubai sightseeing bus operation and the French multinational bus and rail group are bidding against Tawasul Transport, Q-Link Transport, Cars Taxi LLC, Emirates Transport, National Transport, Al Jaber Transport & General Contracting LLC, Al Wathba Company for Central Services, Al Masood Group, Arabia Taxi LLC, National Taxi, Emirates National Group, Al Ghazal Transport, Al Mariah United Group, Dubai Roads & Transport Authority (RTA) and Al Dhafra Co-operative Society.



Is the blinds committee leading us up a few blind alleys?

It should come as no surprise to learn that a committee at either Transport for London or London Buses lays down the specification of destination displays each time a new route contract begins. We have the members of this committee to thank for the ever changing display requirements, including banning the word 'sorry' in front of 'not in service' as well as keeping up general standards in comparison to most other parts of the UK, and for insisting on retaining a rear route number display.

On ultimate destinations, there have been complete policy changes, with — in some cases — such nonsense as substituting 'Croydon Palisades' for 'Croydon Airport', about which I have written previously. Another fad was to eliminate precise ultimate destinations. Happily that idea was soon dropped: Thornton Heath Pond is nowhere near the same place as Thornton Heath High Street. The pond, by the way, was filled in over 50 years ago...about the same time as Croydon Airport closed. The real point should be to use the name by which people identify the area, and that won't be found simply by studying a map.

Last year, buses on route 493 began displaying 'Manor Circus' instead of 'Richmond Manor Circus', a place few people recognise. What was a visitor wanting a bus to Richmond to make of that? Luckily, most drivers reverted to displaying a more helpful blind (intended for another route) reading just 'Richmond'. That didn't satisfy the blinds committee, and with another change of operator on the route a couple of months ago buses now go to 'North Sheen Manor Circus', the last two words being displayed in smaller type, one word above the other. While the terminus is near North Sheen railway station, locals don't think of it as North Sheen. And the place

where the buses lay over is Sainsbury's Richmond supermarket. The demand for simplicity also swept away First London's useful habit of indicating ultimate destinations that were at railway stations by the Underground or National Rail symbols.

Still with us unfortunately are earlier TfL edicts prohibiting any intermediate points on the latest front destination screens, while side ones are often reduced to just one intermediate point. On route 24, there is no mention at all of the key point of Victoria, the side blind just saying '24 via Camden Town'. All this is because you can, in theory, get this information from the individual timetables at each stop. But at busy stops, and with waiting passengers clustered around them, it is hard to get close enough to read the information. Nor do all stops display information for every bus calling there.

If you stand, say, at Victoria Street or Tooting, you will see a remarkable variety of displays on buses on different routes. In Victoria Street, Red Arrow 507 has two intermediate points on front blinds, the 11 goes to Liverpool Street via Victoria and Aldwych on the front, but only via Victoria on the side, while the 148 goes just to Camberwell Green on the front but 'via Victoria' on the side.

When new route 452 started late last year, Travel London used existing Alexander-bodied Tridents that displayed — on brand new sections of blinds — two intermediate destinations on the intermediate blind box fitted to such buses, whereas the new Enviro400s that took over only display an ultimate destination at the front. And one useful earlier innovation that I suppose will soon disappear is that on some of the few routes with scheduled short workings, buses display the useful phrase 'short journey' in their intermediate destination box.



Above: Arriva London VLA58 (LJ04 LFN), a TransBus ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TL, with the 'Short Journey' display in its intermediate blind. JOHN ALDRIDGE



Above: Reduced blinds on preserved RT113 (FXT 288), a 1940 AEC Regent carrying passengers at the Potters Bar running day on 20 May. A 1:24-scale model of this prewar design 2RT will be the first in a chronological series of castings from SunStar, which is following its Routemaster models with similarly large-size AEC and Leyland RTs. ALAN E. MOORE

SHORT HOPS

Arriva London North has retained routes 102 (Edmonton Green-Brent Cross) with 23 new double-deckers and 192 (Enfield Town-Tottenham Hale) with 12 new single-deckers, both from November. Each route gains an extra bus over present requirements, and the 102 becomes a 24hr service.

Seasonal extensions have begun on the two remaining routes still with this once-common facility. Until 23 September on Sundays and bank holidays, route 267 (Hammersmith-Fulwell) extends to Hampton Court, and until 14 September route 215 (Walthamstow Central-Yardley Lane Estate) runs daily on to the Lea Valley Campsite.

Four Green Line coaches in a distinctly non-Green Line livery are orange-painted DAFs of Arriva the Shires on route 757 (Luton Airport-Victoria), on which some seats will be sold to easyBus customers.

Two coffee shops at Canary Wharf are among locations in part of further trials with combined OysterCards and Barclaycards to enable OysterCard holders to pay

for other small purchases. Visa and Transport for London employees will also be issued with the cards as the experiment continues.

The London's Transport Museum's refurbished shop has reopened at the Covent Garden Piazza: following closure of the museum for rebuilding, it occupied temporary accommodation in the nearby shopping precinct.

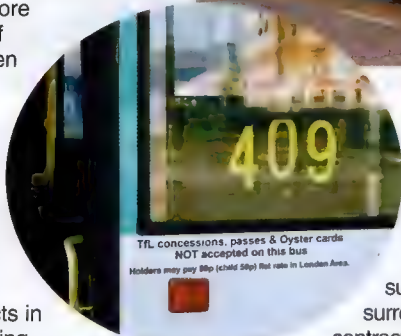
Southdown PSV pulls back across the border

Transport for London has been much better than the old London Transport in being prepared to run buses beyond its boundaries to focal traffic points outside, such as Caterham-on-the-Hill or Redhill.

But other links have been lost, such as the 409, once West Croydon-Godstone-East Grinstead via Purley and Old Coulsdon. In recent years, it has followed a more direct route out of Croydon and when Surrey County Council retendered it last year, Metrobus lost out to Southdown PSV, which also took over other Metrobus contracts in Surrey. The evening service ended and the route was run under London Service Permit rather than London Local Service Agreement conditions, though London bus pass holders were offered a flat 80p fare within the TfL area.



Above and inset: Southdown PSV W554 JVV, a Dennis/Plaxton Super Pointer Dart, on the 409 and the restriction on ticket use that the company displayed for this service. ADAM MURRAY/JOHN ALDRIDGE



However, Southdown PSV suddenly surrendered its contracts for the 409 and the 411 (Redhill-Chelsham Common) earlier this year, saying that more pensioners than expected were taking advantage of their free passes, making the operations uneconomic. Surrey provided extra support until

1 June and has awarded four-year contracts from the following day to Metrobus, no less.

Southdown PSV continues with other routes it won last year, but it will be disposing of most of its four Plaxton President-bodied DAF DB250s. These were among the first low-floor double-deckers in London in 1999, and were ordered originally by Capital Logistics. One ought to be a preservation project one day.

Tunnel troubles provoke interesting reaction

The 108 (Stratford-Blackwall Tunnel-Lewisham) was already London's worst performing bus route, but recently it has got even worse thanks to increasing traffic congestion, vehicle breakdowns in the tunnels and accidents.

The worsening was caused by the sudden ending (after nearly 30 years) of the tidal flow system in the morning rush hour, when northbound traffic was allowed in one of the two lanes of the southbound tunnel for 20 to 40min to clear tailbacks. Apparently, Transport for London (the non-bus branch, I hope) axed the system on police advice after a motorcyclist nearly died trying to overtake (a banned manoeuvre). Now, after many complaints about the resulting

added congestion, the Metropolitan Police Authority chairman admits to a 'failure of communication' between police and TfL. Since there is closed circuit television in the tunnel, I can't help wondering why people seen overtaking have not been prosecuted.

Most drivers on the 108 have that resigned attitude to the delays and frustrations they encounter, but they can also be quite resourceful, as a friend recently found. Returning home from Stansted Airport to Blackheath on a Sunday evening, he changed from a National Express coach to a 108 at Stratford. The bus arrived late and was boarded by a large number of passengers, who stood, sat or squatted in every available space.

Progress towards the tunnel entrance was incredibly slow, and when the bus approached the entrance, a sign said 'tunnel closed for cleaning: diversion'. The driver stopped the bus, creating more congestion behind, and refused to take the diversion. 'I know nothing about this diversion,' he told the officials, 'neither do my bosses, nor my passengers. I'm not prepared to take the diversion.'

Consternation reigned, but eventually a police car arrived and preceded the bus through the closed tunnel. At times, they had to stop and wait for cleaning equipment to be moved to one side, but the driver was able to drop his passengers exactly where they expected.

Route successes prompt expanded services

Two of the new high frequency double-deck routes launched in 2002 ahead of the first round of the congestion charging scheme opened up new journey opportunities, whereas most others just linked up the busiest sections of existing routes.

One of the two was the 148 (Shepherd's Bush-Camberwell Green), operated by Transdev London, and the other the 205 (Paddington-Whitechapel), operated by Metroline and a replacement for one of the relatively infrequent routes linking main line rail terminals for the benefit of elderly and disabled people. Each needed 17 buses, a considerable number.

The 148 gained another six buses a couple of years ago, and then some peak hour enhancements this year. This year, too, a modest eastward extension to the 205 (off-peak running time 8min) takes it from Whitechapel to Mile End, with frequency improved from a nominal 10min to every 7.5min, plus a half-hourly night service. The peak requirement has risen to 23 buses.

The extension farther along the Mile End Road will help out the articulated bus-operated 25, which was previously the only route serving one particular stretch of road. Around 60 years ago, three main bus routes on the same stretch of road offered a peak 36 buses an hour, plus two trolleybus routes, with one of the trolleybus routes running every 2min, the other every 3min, in rush hours. There is not the industry in the area that there used to be, and the population has declined, but the vast Royal London Hospital on this stretch is far busier.

A strange feature of the 205 extension is that the final setting down point, and the first picking up point in the other direction, are request stops, while the westbound one doesn't even have a timetable displayed. Much of the route's passenger flow is to/from Paddington, Marylebone, King's Cross/St Pancras and Liverpool Street railway stations, offices and shops, but the hospital at Whitechapel attracts longer distance passengers.



Left: Another new combination for London is the East Lancs-bodied MAN 12.240 for Metrobus, of which 703 (PN07 KRU) is seen in Sherborne Road, Petts Wood. MARK LYONS



Last knockings for retired Cornish coaches

This is a story to send aspiring coach preservationists rushing for blood pressure tablets, supplies of oxygen or the attentions of the nearest nurse. It's the King of Crash, the annual coach demolition derby held this year at St Day racetrack near Redruth in Cornwall on 6 May. An event where coaches otherwise destined to be taken apart by a breaker's torch are driven into each other in an orgy of entertaining destruction.

Simon Coates, who supplied me with these pictures, says that the first such race in 2005 was so popular that it has become a regular feature of the track's calendar. Just like similar more numerous events with cars, the formula is a simple one. The

coaches race alongside and — crucially — into one another until the weakest one retires crippled. The process continues until only one is left sufficiently intact to claim the winner's prize.

For this third event, the winner was a Volvo B58 of Roselyn Coaches of Par, with a Plaxton Supreme VI body — the relatively rare variety with shallow flat side windows. It demolished a Plaxton Viewmaster in the final run-off, the earlier stages having finished off a Plaxton Paramount-bodied Ford R-Series and a Caetano Viana midicoach. Having said that, I don't think there was enough left of the Supreme VI to leave much chance of it making the Monday morning school run.



Déjà vu Down Under for Gerald

Gerald Walker, who used to operate coaches in Cumbria and now spends part of his retirement holidaying in New Zealand, had one of those 'Where am I?' moments in the city of Dunedin.

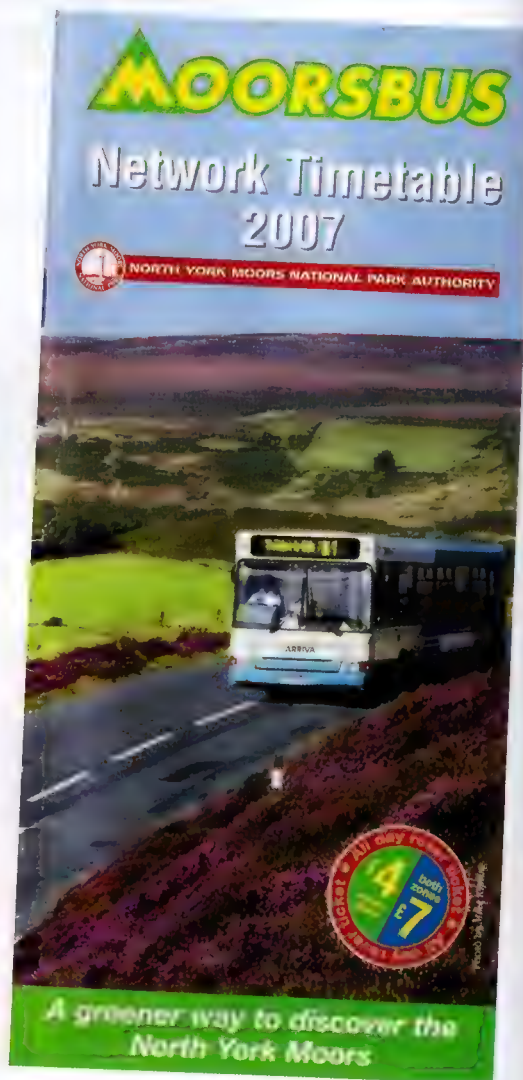
As far as he was aware, he was in the Otago Settlers' Museum, next door to the city's railway station, but he began to feel he was somewhere thousands of miles away as he progressed around the transport exhibits and found himself in a large art deco hall with leather settees, cinema-style doors, hatches with counters and 'Arrival Platform' and 'Departure Platform' signs in a deco font called Broadway. Was he really in Dunedin or London's Victoria Coach Station, which this year celebrates its 75th birthday? A look outside did nothing to alter the effect.

It turns out, he tells me, that the museum is in the former New Zealand Railways Road Services coach station. It's a little younger than VCS, dating from 1937/38, but clearly is of the same period. Not only that, but this earthquake and fireproof facility was designed by the same architecture practice, Wallis Gilbert & Partners, which also was responsible for the truly magnificent Hoover building on Western Avenue in Perivale, west London.



Who needs passengers on this Pointer?

At least six of you — Ian Charlton, Doug Eves, Caroline Mathews, Richard Todd, Trevor Smith and Tony Greaves as I write this — have taken time to send me evidence of Arriva's door-less Pointer Dart on the cover of the latest Moorsbus timetable for services on the North York Moors. When converting an offside view to a nearside, the computer operator has taken great care to change the critical detail of the front of the bus, like the driving position, destination display, registration plate and fleetnames. Shame about the side, then. Careful scrutiny shows a fleetname and advertisement back to front, but the greatest omission of all is a means of boarding or alighting.



Sunny Shipley by the sea? Maybe not...

I realise it's a while since I last shared one of the many postcards several of you have sent in for my series of unlikely souvenir views of ordinary buses in relatively unremarkable British towns. Indeed, it's over three years since Keith Renshaw sent in this Lilywhite production of Shipley Market Place in what looks like the 1950s. The buses in the foreground are West

Yorkshire Road Car Bristol K-type double-deckers and an L-type single-deck, while a distance behind is an all-Leyland Royal Tiger coach. The building nearest the camera (Shipley's finest?) is an office block housing the North Eastern Gas Board. Feel free to continue sharing similar scenes of buses in underwhelming settings with your fellow readers.



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LIGHTEST BUS OF THE MONTH

John Lowe from Thornaby on Tees wins this month's Corgi Original Omnibus Company diecast model prize for an offbeat bus picture by sending me this line-up taken at the Plaxton centenary weekend in Scarborough in April.

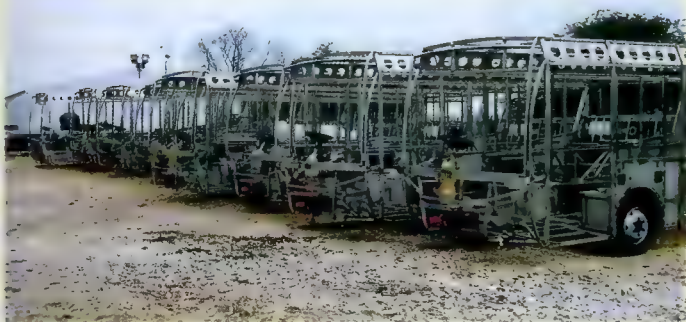
With maybe half an eye to an April Fool opportunity, he suggests that these are examples of the new 'green' Skeletal Primo, the ultimate lightweight midibus that cuts fuel consumption by 25%, minimises its carbon footprint and has air conditioning as standard. As this isn't our April issue and we're not fooling you, the truth is that this is how the Primo arrives



from the Enterprise Bus factory in Hungary, ready to be panelled and fitted out by Plaxton for sale in the UK.

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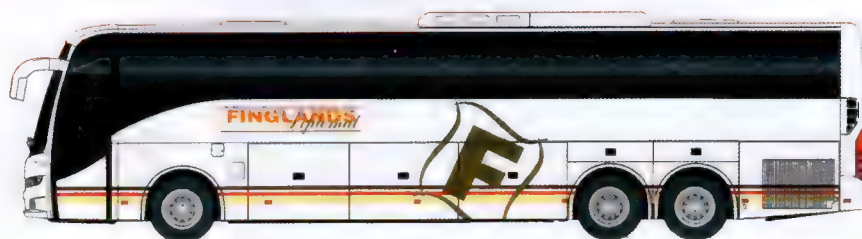


A touch of Yorkshire in south Manchester

ALAN MILLAR relates the story of Finlands, the EYMS Group subsidiary that this year celebrates its first 100 years in business

There is no shortage of anniversaries to celebrate at the EYMS Group, which last year marked the 80th birthday of its core business, East Yorkshire Motor Services. This past February saw the 20th anniversary of its sale by the National Bus Company to a management team of which chairman Peter Shipp and his family are now sole owners and in May it was 15 years since it made its first acquisition outside its home area to buy Finlands Coachways of Manchester. Also this year — no one knows exactly which day or month — is the centenary of Finlands' formation, which makes the south Manchester company one of the country's longest surviving coach and bus operators.

It's 55 years since any member of the Fingland family last owned it and probably about 80 since it first ran coaches, but if Plaxton



Above: An impression of what the new Volvo 9700 Manchester City team coach will look like. **VOLVO**

— which also has had a few owners since the last Mr Plaxton retired, and didn't build coaches in its early years — can celebrate its centenary in 2007, then so too can Finlands.

Today, Finlands operates 47 buses and 11 coaches. The bus side has grown over the past 22 years to serve the predominantly student communities along the Wilmslow Road corridor into the city centre, and clearly is the big reason why it fits into the larger EYMS family. The coach fleet, significantly, has remained around the same size for the past 30 years, even though much of the work it does has changed, but it remains the foundation on which the

business was built and — along with the fact that the company has always been based in the suburb of Rusholme (famed today for its many curry house restaurants) — is a common thread running back to the 1920s.

Limos, football coaches... even aeroplanes

The founder, Charlie Fingland, was a test driver with Rolls-Royce who set up a chauffeur-driven limousine hire venture primarily for weddings and funerals. It had a dozen limousines and hearses by 1927 when he is believed to have bought his first coach, a Leyland Tiger, to cater for the private hire market around Rusholme and develop an excursions programme, elements of which still operate today.

He also secured a contract still in place to transport Manchester City Football Club, as Maine Road — its stadium from 1923 to 2003 — was about half a mile from Finlands' depot. In its centenary year, Finlands is awaiting delivery of the team coach to end all team coaches, a 13.8m Polish-built tri-axle Volvo 9700 with just 32 luxurious seats. At nearly £300,000, this not only will be Finlands' most expensive new coach ever, but also the most expensive for any EYMS fleet.

In real terms, it may be no more expensive than the coaches with which Finlands launched an ambitious venture in 1930, a twice-



Left: Crowds line the streets in 1934 as the victorious Manchester City team carries the FA Cup on the roof of a Fingland's AEC Regal. City beat Portsmouth 2-1 that year. **FINLANDS**

Left: 1702 (YX56 DZK), one of five Alexander Dennis Enviro300 single-deckers delivered last year, at St Mary's Hospital. **JOHN YOUNG**

Right: The 1949 airline venture even offered customers temporary membership of the Isle of Wight Flying Club for the duration of that part of their visit. **FINGLANDS**

Below right: A Plaxton Embassy-bodied Bedford SB coach in Lower Moseley Street bus station, Manchester. **FINGLANDS**

daily service (one daytime, one overnight) between Manchester and London. The coaches then were AEC Regals and Duple-bodied Tilling Stevens Expresses with toilets, what *The Coaching Journal & Booking Agents' Gazette* of the day described as 26 seats of 'most commodious armchair comfort' and radios to entertain passengers on the long journey. Finglands opened an all-operators' coach station at Great Bridgewater Street in central Manchester in 1931, and a London office — Fingland House — the following year in Southampton Row, Bloomsbury.

Fares were 15/- (75p) single and 25/- (£1.25) return, but Finglands sold the road service licences and the Manchester coach terminal to North Western Road Car in 1937. Charlie Fingland had died four years earlier, aged 54, though the company remained in family ownership until 1952. His son Robert, who served in the Royal Air Force in World War 2, embarked on another ambitious venture between 1949 and 1952 when he set up Fingland's Airways.

Just as a few bus and coach operators diversified into aviation in the 1930s, he used aircraft and limousines to offer the ultimate in luxury English holidays for the better-heeled citizens of austerity Britain. His two twin-engined Avro Anson airliners had only eight passenger seats each, but Finglands' breakthrough was to secure Ministry of Civil Aviation approval to sell individual seats rather than have to charter the aircraft to a single group.

For the first season, one eight-day all-inclusive package was available twice a week for 25 guineas (£26.10), half a guinea (52.5p) more in July and August. Passengers rode from Manchester to the city's Ringway airport by car, took off at 10.00 and were in Penzance for lunch. After four days' touring, they flew on to Shanklin on the Isle of Wight for three more nights and more touring, then flew back to Manchester after lunch on the eighth day. 'During the trip, one third of the English coastline is flown over and the whole route covers 700 miles,' *Thompson's Weekly News* reported, adding: 'Except after special application, baggage is limited to 30lb [13.6kg] but ration books are not needed.'

By the following year, a choice of five holidays of six to 17 days' duration was available, using hotels in Torquay, Ilfracombe and Bournemouth and airports at Exeter, Chivenor and Hurn. Prices ranged from 17 guineas (£17.85) to 39 guineas (£40.95)

including airport transfers, breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner. However, Fingland's advised that 'tourists are respectfully requested to take their own soap and towels'.



From management buyout to local bus operation

Robert Fingland retired to South Africa in 1952, selling the business to a management buyout. General manager Robert Bunning became managing director and principal shareholder along with his wife Grace, with company secretary Alf Packwood a co-director. When Robert Bunning died in 1965, his son Bob and daughters Dorothea Shurden and Barbara Brewer inherited the business. Dorothea's husband, John Shurden, became a director and coach manager and their son David Shurden has been with the company since 1980, now as director in charge of Finglands and EYMS's Whittle subsidiary in Shropshire.

In 1971, Finglands — by then trading as Finglands South Manchester Coachways — acquired C. Holt, the coach operator that occupied the site next door. The merger allowed Finglands to invest two years later in a new £500,000 office block and covered garage for around two dozen vehicles behind the two detached houses that had been Finglands' and Holt's headquarters. The houses were demolished to create a forecourt and filling station. Finglands later

teamed up with Bullock's of Cheadle to create Accord Tours, which acquired Fieldsend's of Salford. Bullock's subsequently sold its interest in Accord and Fieldsend's was absorbed into Finglands.

The idea of running buses grew out of the 1980 Transport Act, which besides deregulating express coach services, excursions and tours, also made it more difficult for established operators to object to new local bus services. Ironically given how many buses have fought for passengers along the Wilmslow Road since 1986, there weren't enough in the early 1980s to carry the large numbers of students between halls of residence in Owens Park, just south of Finglands' depot, and the university facilities a mile to its north. On rainy days — of which legend would have you believe Manchester has many — long queues of students at bus stops snaked round into side streets. ▶





Left: Manchester Piccadilly in May 1993, with 1732 (LTK 93R), a Roe-bodied Leyland Atlantean new to Plymouth, ahead of an ex-GMPTE Atlantean in the Bee Line Buzz fleet owned by British Bus. JOHN YOUNG

Finglands applied for a licence to operate a shuttle service with lower fares than on Greater Manchester PTE buses, which served Wilmslow Road from points well to the south of Rusholme. The PTE persuaded the traffic commissioners that these services were against the public interest, as they would abstract traffic from its existing routes and endanger services to outlying areas. Instead of running a public service, Finglands hired six or seven coaches a day to students.

Soon after, independent schools in the area approached Finglands to provide buses to carry pupils in from affluent outlying suburbs. The PTE argued initially that these children were not entitled to subsidised travel, but parents mounted a successful legal challenge to have that restriction overturned. Finglands then realised that these two traffic flows were compatible and that, when bus services were deregulated, they were combined into an all-day service into Manchester city centre. 'Students were getting on where most of the children were getting off,' says David Shurden.

Today, a core Wilmslow Road service operates at least every 5min between Withington and the city centre from 06.30 until 03.30 (midnight on Sundays), in addition to schools services (available to the general public) to more distant destinations like Ashton, Middleton, Stockport and Altrincham. The core service splits at Withington, with route 42 following Palatine Road to East Didsbury every 10min, while the 41 and 48 remain on Wilmslow Road to provide a 10min service to Northenden, the 41 extending every 20min to Sale. It took from 1986 to 2000 to establish such a regular pattern on journeys out of the city, as the allocation of stand spaces at Piccadilly Gardens meant that buses were often forced to depart in pairs.

Congestion and the UK North effect

One of the most graphic illustrations of the effect of traffic congestion is that, since 2000, Finglands' fleet has grown by seven buses just to maintain frequencies. David Shurden says buses battle for road space in areas where some traffic management measures make an already difficult situation worse. In Rusholme and Withington, urban regeneration schemes have narrowed already narrow roads, and there are several points where buses have to cut in and out of the main traffic flow to reach stops and bus lanes.

The Wilmslow Road service was also strengthened by withdrawing Finglands' service on the 192 (Manchester-Hazel Grove) along the A6. It operated a night service on this route before EYMS took over, but established a daytime presence in October 1995 by acquiring the original Stagecoach Manchester business from Ribble in a move that freed Stagecoach to acquire GM Buses South. This was one of four non-core Stagecoach businesses that EYMS bought, the others being the Armstrong Galley, Charterplan and Kingstorian coach operations in Newcastle, Manchester and Hull. By the time it withdrew its remaining 192 service in May 2006, Finglands had reduced it to a Friday and Saturday night service.

Pulling off the 192 was a direct consequence of the aggressive competitive tactics of UK North, the operator (and its GM Buses sister) put off the road by the traffic commissioner just before Christmas — a situation that also

provoked Stagecoach, the principal operator in this part of Manchester, to respond with heavy duplication on the same routes. David Shurden says Finglands is happy to compete equally and vies with Stagecoach (main brand and Magic Bus) and Bullock's on the Wilmslow Road. Over the past 20 years, this corridor has also been served by such other post-deregulation operators as Wall's, Mancunian and South Manchester Transport, as well as Mybus, a predecessor of UK North, put off the road in 1993.

In Finglands' view, competition from UK North and GM Buses wasn't equal. As an example, it cites the impact on the key bus stop at Owens Park halls of residence, where a traffic regulation condition was imposed in 1997 that prevented buses from stopping there for any longer than necessary to pick up waiting passengers. 'We tried to adhere to that,' says David Shurden, 'but if UK North parked buses there for 20min, then we couldn't legally stop there to collect passengers.' He says it complained regularly for a long time before the traffic commissioner revoked the twin operators' licences.

This intense competition also drove down fares, with Finglands cutting its student weekly ticket from £5 to £4, then to £2 six years ago. Now it's back to £4. 'To get students to wait for our buses, we had to have a USP. The £2 weekly ticket had a very positive effect on patronage and revenue,' he says. Revenue is running much higher year-on-year since UK North came off the road and EYMS can again consider investing in new buses for Manchester.

The next buses will most likely be double-deckers, as last year's purchase of five Alexander Dennis Enviro300 single-deckers for Finglands was driven by the needs of the time. With its oldest double-deckers — 1989 Volvo Citybuses — too old for GMPTE tendered work, it needed new low-floor vehicles and it wanted to raise staff morale. There were no double-



Right: Duple 300-bodied Leyland Tiger 301 (F301 JNC), new in 1989, in Manchester Piccadilly in October 1992, a few months after EYMS bought the business. JOHN YOUNG

deckers available from manufacturers' stock last summer, and with students more willing to stand on busy journeys on these routes, their lack of seating capacity isn't the handicap that it could be elsewhere.

A close encounter with Shearings

Acquisition by EYMS took Finglands into its third phase of ownership, yet the Finglands name came close to disappearing around 1989 when Bob Bunning — who followed Robert Fingland's example and now lives in South Africa — was on the brink of selling the business to another big name buyer.

Shearings, then steadily buying up smaller operators in England and Wales and developing local bus services to complement its coach holiday business, came within one day of taking over. Part of the attraction was that Shearings then operated service 130 between Macclesfield and Manchester and intended to use the Wilmslow Road depot for crew changeovers. The deal was so advanced that Ian Longworth — Shearings' managing director, who later bought his employer's remaining bus operations and some coach activities to create Bolton-based Timeline — was introduced to Finglands' staff as their new boss. However, Shearings was part of the Pleasurama group, which Mecca Leisure acquired in 1989. After spending six months licking its new business into shape, Mecca was itself taken over by Rank Group, which put an immediate block on all incomplete transactions.

Clearly, Bob Bunning wasn't rushing to sell his business and when an agent approached EYMS with details, chairman Peter Shipp says that, at first glance, Finglands appeared very expensive. 'We sent our business development manager to look at it and he sussed out that its secret weapons were the long distance services for private schools, plus concessionary fares. As a bus operator, it was successful and we worked out that the expensive price was not unreasonable.' It also was in a convenient location across the M62 from EYMS's Hull head office. 'It was big enough to stand on its own two feet and near enough for us to manage it.' Some time before, it had walked away from a 10-vehicle business in Cornwall on the grounds that it met neither of those tests.

Ironically, while the 1973 depot — which EYMS rents from Bob Bunning — was twice the size that Finglands' needed when built, it now constrains future growth. It is close to bursting point on the few hours every night when all 58 vehicles are back at base, or as Peter Shipp puts it, 'this is the upper limit of what we can operate'. With the coach fleet refocused on private hire work — much of it for the university — and a reduced excursions programme, expansion is more likely to come from bus routes. 'We have considered buying other



Above: The current fleet includes four Northern Counties Palatine-bodied Volvo Olympians new to Stagecoach in 1996 and returned off lease to Volvo in 2004. Three of them, including 1784 (P532 HMP), were originally in the Stagecoach London fleet. JOHN YOUNG

operators for their depot capacity,' he explains, 'and if a 12-vehicle site came up that was close at hand, then we would consider it. But if we went to another site, we would need a quantum leap in revenue to pay for it.' Such a move would allow the current depot to become a bus-only operation.

A few years ago, however, continued tenure of the site looked risky when Petrofina, which then owned the forecourt, sold that part of the site to Repsol, the Spanish oil company. Repsol then sold all its UK sites *en bloc* to a developer,

who secured planning permission to build between 20 and 30 flats in front of the bus depot. Householders rarely make happy neighbours for bus garages with lots of overnight activity and the prospects for Finglands didn't look promising. But the developer didn't proceed with the plan, Bob Bunning reacquired the forecourt and currently rents it to a car washing company. For now, Finglands can contemplate continued operation from a site it has occupied for most of the past 100 years.

The Finglands fleet — May 2007

Coaches

365 (N608 END)	Volvo B10M-62GL	Plaxton Premiere 320 C53F	1996
367 (RYV 77)	Volvo B10M-62	Van Hool Alizée C43Ft	1997
370 (647 JOE)	Volvo B10M-62GL	Plaxton Premiere 350 C49Ft	1999
371 (SIA 6180)	Volvo B10M-62GL	Plaxton Premiere 350 C53F	2001
372 (10 RU)	Volvo B10M-62GL	Plaxton Premiere C34Ft	2001
373 (HIL 7746)	Volvo B10M-62GL	Plaxton Panther C49Ft	2001
374 (YR52 MDZ)	Volvo B12M	Plaxton Paragon C49Ft	2002
375 (HIL 7745)	Volvo B10M-62GL	Plaxton Paragon C49Ft	2002
376/7 (YN55 WTP/P)	Volvo B12B	Plaxton Paragon C49Ft	2006
378 (YX56 HYM)	Volvo B12B	Plaxton Panther C49Ft	2006
379 (FC07 MCF)	Volvo B12B	Volvo 9700 C32Ft	2007*

* On order

Buses

1701-5 (YX56 DZJ-M/O)	Alexander Dennis Enviro300 B44F		2006
1739 (M832 HVC),	Volvo Olympian	Alexander Royale H45/29F	1994 (a)
1740-3 (N740-3 VBA)	Volvo Olympian	Alexander Royale H45/29F	1995
1744-8 (N744-6, 47, 748 ANE)	Volvo Olympian	Northern Counties Palatine H47/30F	1996
1759/60 (X585/4 XKH)	Dennis Trident	Alexander ALX400 H45/29F	2000 (b)
1761/2 (X761/2 ABU)	Volvo B7TL	Plaxton President H45/28F	2000
1763/4 (X763/4 ABU)	Dennis Trident	Alexander ALX400 H45/29F	2000
1765-8 (MF51 LZW/X, MBV/X)	Volvo B7TL	Plaxton President H45/28F	2001
1769-73 (N131-5 YRW)	Volvo Olympian	Alexander RH H45/29F	1996 (c)
1774-6 (N592/8, 603 BRH)	Volvo Olympian	Alexander Royale RL H51/33F	1995 (b)
1777-82 (R417-20, 780/1 SOY)	Volvo Olympian	Northern Counties Palatine II H47/29F	1997 (d)
1783-5 (P527/32/4 HMP)	Volvo Olympian	Northern Counties Palatine H47/29F	1996 (e)
1786 (P531 EFL)	Volvo Olympian	Northern Counties Palatine H49/33F	1996 (e)
1787-90 (N596/7, 601/2 BRH)	Volvo Olympian	Alexander Royale RL H45/29F	1995 (b)

(a) ex-demonstrator; (b) ex-East Yorkshire; (c) ex-London United; (d) ex-Armchair; (e) ex-Stagecoach



Left: Open-top AEC Routemaster COY 004 (FPT 588C) in Malta in May, with advertising for the new hop-on sightseeing service already applied to its Big Bus Company livery. It still carried its RMF588 fleetnumber from London and the advertisement on the staircase panel is for the Big Bus information centre in Buckingham Palace Road. PAUL OGILVIE

TOM JOHNSON brings us up-to-date with developments on the Mediterranean island, where secondhand British buses are being bought for local bus routes and a new sightseeing venture

New directions for Malta

There have been two major changes in the Maltese bus industry since I last visited the island in 2005. One is that the government-funded purchase of new low-floor vehicles has ended and the other is that open-top double-deck sightseeing services have at last been authorised.

With no more new low-floor buses, principally King Longs from China and BMC Falcons from Turkey, owner-drivers are again buying secondhand European Union-friendly buses. First to enter service — by 1 March — was DBY 451, a Bedford YMQ with Plaxton Derwent B47F bodywork, formerly D136 XVW with Hylton & Dawson of Leicester. For operation on Malta, it was fitted with a rear nearside wheelchair lift and folding back seat.

It was followed by the first of several Leyland Lynxes from Britain. As already reported in Fleet News, former Travel West Midlands G168 EOG and G221 EOG have been re-registered DBY 315 and FBY 703, while former Preston Bus F211/3 YHG arrived on the roll-on/roll-off ferry *Grand Scandinavia* on 13 March, but had yet to enter service two months later. More Lynxes from Preston Bus are expected in the coming months. The latest arrival is one of Britain's first low-floor buses, L38 WLH — a Wright Pathfinder-bodied Dennis Lance SLF new to Metroliner in London Buses days and most recently with UK North in Manchester.

Other long-term absentees recently returned to service include EBY 620, a 1953 Leyland Royal Tiger PSU1/13 with newer Caruana B45F

major rebuild to the front and was fitted with larger side windows incorporating top-sliders. AEC Regal III DBY 312 (chassis new 1948) was replaced by a King Long in July 2003 but is back in service, re-registered EBY 484.

Cancu-owned ex-London Transport AEC Swift SMS274 (EGN 274J) has re-entered service as route bus EBY 623. This vehicle has had several guises on Malta and has been in and out of service during the recent past. My last sighting of it was as LCY 907 in the 'unscheduled' fleet. Similar EBY 541 (SMS247: EGN 247J) has returned to service after over two years' idleness.

The only forward control bus in regular daily service is Zammit-bodied Ford Thames ET7 EBY 537. Paramount Coaches purchased five others when the low-floor buses arrived and intends to export them for preservation, while a further 18 (including three Thames Traders and the unique Magirus-Deutz) remain in government ownership, their future unknown.

Long-term rebuilding projects involve Leyland Tiger Cub FBY 707 and Commer Avenger EBY 629. Bedford SGB EBY 451 has become driver trainer DBN 971, repainted in the livery of Kalafrana route buses of bygone days. Also a driver trainer (as Rudolph Training Coach) is Duple Dominant-bodied Bedford YMT RUU 071, previously registered LAW 132 and originally MMJ 544V with Tourmaster of Dunstable.

There also have been changes to the low-floor fleet since 2005. Solitary Optare Excel FBY 805 has changed hands and has been well restored with a new windscreen and paneling, while incongruously registered Solaris Valetta EBY 433 now carries correct registration DBY 433.

Two less successful low-floor demonstrators

Above left: DBY 451, the ex-Hylton & Dawson Bedford YMQ with Plaxton Derwent body, in Porta Reala bus station, Valletta on 1 March. Note the extra door towards the rear for the wheelchair lift. TOM JOHNSON

Left: Leyland Lynx DBY 315, previously Travel West Midlands 1168 (G168 EOG), ready to enter service. KEITH TILL



have moved on. The Chinese-built Chongqing was donated to a Maltese charity, The Community Chest Fund, and is in a blue livery, registered TFI 317, while the TransBus Dart with Serbian-built Neobus body is in Sussex with Ham's of Flimwell (*Buses*, June 2006).

Double-deckers at last

This year's other big Maltese development is the long delayed start of open-top double-deck tourist bus services, to be known as Route A and Route B, in May. They start in Sliema and cover the north and south of the island, the North Tour covering Msida, San Anton, Ta'Qali, Mdina, Dingli Cliffs, Bingemma Valley and Golden Bay, while the South Tour serves Msida, Valletta, Senglea, Vittoriosa, Tarxien, Marsaxlokk, Zurrieq and the Blue Grotto. These are similar to Visit Malta tourist routes 505/506, which operated for a couple of seasons between 2003 and 2005, but were summarily withdrawn soon after my last visit to Malta.

Cancu's three ex-Thamesdown ECW-bodied Leyland Fleetlines, UMR 191-3T, have been repainted white with 'Hop on Malta Bus Sightseeing Hop Off' vinyls, fitted with an eight-language commentary system and — for the first time — allocated Maltese registration marks (COY 002/1/3 respectively). The battle to gain acceptance for these vehicles to work in service on the island has been long, hard and probably political — and may not be over. Garden of Eden — whose three open-toppers were not authorised to operate the routes and consequently remain under dustsheets at its depot — brought a court case against the award to Cancu, citing loss of earnings, but this matter has since gone quiet.

To provide the full service, Cancu has imported four other double-deckers from Britain. Open-top ex-Northern General AEC Routemaster FPT 588C arrived on 27 March, was re-registered COY 004 and will retain its maroon and cream livery from previous owner The Big Bus Company in London. Three Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybuses, new to Strathclyde Buses and latterly with First Manchester, followed around a month later. These are former First



Above: Beneath the more modern lines of its Caruana body is the chassis of a 54-year-old Leyland Royal Tiger new to Bournemouth Corporation. It has returned to service after a 12-year absence. TOM JOHNSON

30370/3/80 (G301 OGE, G688 PNS, G524 RDS) of which 30370 was deroofed accidentally before withdrawal by First.

Route developments

Among more radical alterations to the bus route network, Cancu has operated the Sliema town service since February, using a red Mercedes-Benz Sprinter minibus HMY 194. This subsidised route serves a maze of narrow streets away from the coast road in Sliema uphill into Savoy.

It defies belief how full-size route buses managed this route before, but while the Sprinter is brand new and provided with a wheelchair lift, it has a step entrance and heavy sliding door. Most passengers using the service are pensioners, we learnt, who have difficulty climbing aboard, and if my experience of having to shut the door on the driver's behalf at every stop is par for the course, then this problem also has to be addressed. Cancu has since provided Scania Safrans HMY 152 for the route. While retaining its red front, as it is still part of the minibus fleet, it otherwise carries full Cancu Supreme livery.

A free park-&-ride service into Valletta began on 6 November last year between Blata l-Bajda and within the Valletta city walls near the site of the old Opera House. It operates up to every 2min between 06.00 and 01.00 with a dedicated fleet of red minibuses.

To coincide with the introduction of controlled vehicle access into Valletta from 2 May, two half-hourly peak period express routes were launched to attract car commuters on to public

transport. The 153 from Mosta and 132 from Zurrieq operate between 06.50 and 09.20 and between 16.40 and 19.10, making only six intermediate stops. Mosta and Zurrieq have been chosen as the guinea-pig towns for these routes, as large numbers of their residents drive to work in Valletta. Low-floor vehicles are advertised as operating the routes.

Half-hourly route 198 was introduced on 1 November 2006, linking Valletta bus terminus with the cruise liner terminal to cater for increasing numbers of visitors arriving by sea. Route 81 to Dingli has been extended along the rutted roads to Dingli Cliffs between 09.30 and 16.30, thus providing easy access to the cliffs and the nearby radio tracking station. As with the new double-deck routes, this echoes the former northerly Visit Malta route, which also passed this way.

Leisure market moves

A notable addition to the ranks of 'unscheduled' vehicles in the Cancu fleet is yet another acquisition from Rambler of Hastings, 1950 Plaxton-bodied Austin CXB 29-seater FCO 314, which now carries the registration LCY 003 from a rebodied and now stored prewar Chevrolet. Like it, the Austin will operate on the Sliema to Three Cities Tour.

A private venture, which has received some publicity but has yet to gain official blessing, is the AmphiCoach project of local resident George Smith. Employing the skills of former workers from the Maltese Dry Docks, he has built a bright yellow high-floor amphibious coach seating about 50 passengers and which complies with ECE R66 rollover protection standards.

My thanks to Brendan Fox, Stuart Harvey, Marco Zammit and Peter Skerry for their help with this article.



Left: Ex-London Transport AEC Swift DBY 426 in service last summer. This Marshall-bodied example was new to LT in 1970 as SM15 (AML 15H). ASHLEY LOVERING

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introduction of one-person operation reduced the role of traditional rear-entrance halfcab double-deckers and when Barton began replacing its double-deckers with new coaches. Paul Roberts has managed to capture much of the atmosphere of the 'old' Midlands bus industry in a book that normally retails for £9.99.

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Virtual bus rides from Southend on Sea

RICHARD DELAHOY tests the new Traveline South East planner

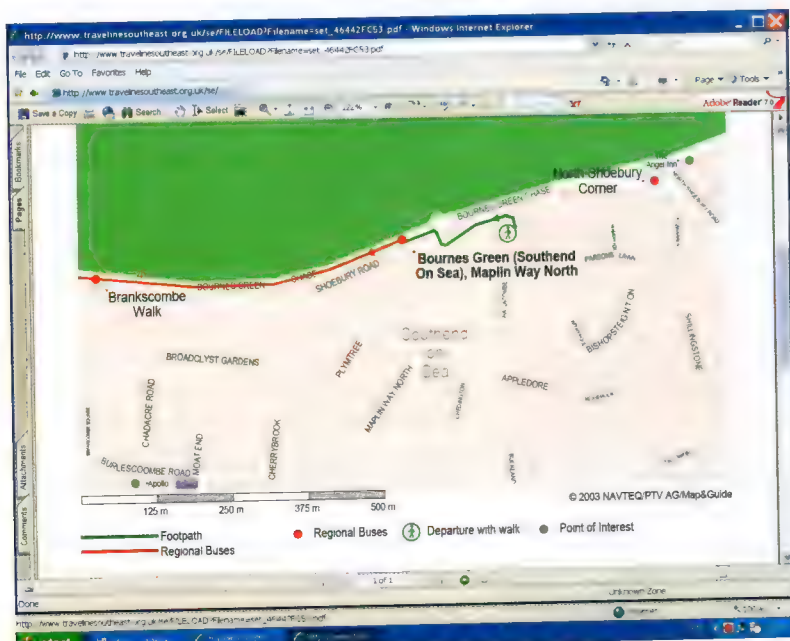
Regular readers will recall the debate last year here and in the You Write section about the relative merits of printed timetable information and journey planners. I can see both sides of the argument, but I'm pleased to report on a significant enhancement to the Traveline South East journey planner, which now offers greater flexibility and more useful information.

When you first visit www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk you are presented with a busy screen that can be daunting, with 14 buttons you could click on, plus the 'to' and 'from' choices and date/time of travel — and that's not counting another 21 potential choices in the options section. So it's best to take a few seconds to take in what is on the screen instead of diving straight in. The 'from' and 'to' boxes now allow you to input almost anything you like, such as a town name or a postcode. Next to both boxes is a 'Map' button, and clicking this brings up a locality map that can be zoomed in to street level and shows the location of every bus stop. Then it is simply a case of clicking on the one you want to travel from. Do the same for the destination, adjust the start date and time if necessary (the system assumes you want to travel straightaway) and click on 'Submit'.

The results are presented in the customary journey planner format and include mapping options, so that you can see maps of the start and finish points, with the route marked, or an overview map for the whole journey. This really is very useful, particularly in unfamiliar areas where you may not have a natural feel for the geography. However, despite our April Fool spoof (Millar's Tales, April), they don't yet give you the bus fleetnumber or driver's name. One minor niggle is that it is necessary to turn off your pop-up blocker in order to display maps, but the site makes this clear (even if not all users would know how to do it).

Your preferences can be refined to exclude certain modes of travel, or to limit walking time, select routes involving longer journey times but fewer changes, and so on. Indeed, there is almost everything you need to know, except for the one big remaining black hole — fares — but I suspect you already know my views on that omission.

The results can be printed, with timetables produced as PDF documents, and these can now be produced both at the timing point level or expanded to show every single stop. What don't appear to be shown — at least from my random browsing — are hail-&-ride sections of route. This is an unfortunate omission in areas with no fixed stops.



Above: EU07 FVM, one of four new 24-seat Optare Solo M780s that Stephenson's of Essex is operating on the Dengie Peninsula services.
RUSSELL YOUNG

A particularly useful feature is the ability to search for all services from a particular locality. Simply select the 'Timetable' option and input the place name, leaving the service number and operator name blank, and you'll get a list of all services from that place. This is useful for enthusiasts visiting an unfamiliar town and wondering just whose buses they can expect to find.

How well does it work in practice?

Checking times from home to central Southend, the bus journey I make most often, was straightforward and produced the expected results. Next I sought details of the bus services in the Dengie peninsula, a remote part of Essex where Stephenson's has just replaced the former Arriva-operated, Rural Bus Grant-funded network.

One of the key villages served is Bradwell on Sea and being lazy, I simply typed Bradwell into the search box. It offered six choices, one in Essex, but not the Bradwell I was seeking. Yet if I type in 'Southend', the system is capable of finding Southend on Sea, so why not Bradwell on Sea? Adjusting my request to include the full name, I was disappointed to see the timetables could not cope with the concept of stops being served on request to set down only, simply suggesting there was no service to particular locations at certain times of day.

Another random search showed some of First's express services to Stansted Airport were classified as bus routes, but others as coach routes. This distinction is important, given the premium fares charged, which can be four or five times the cost of equivalent local services. I could go on, but this highlights one of the key weaknesses of any information systems. They rely on accurate data input. The more sophisticated journey planners become, the greater the need for absolute accuracy and timely updating — a truly mammoth task.

Overall, the redesigned planner is a big improvement, particularly for the mapping, but with some data inaccuracies and no fares information, I can't award a gold star yet.

In my next column I'll show how Trent Barton is also now offering route maps on line. If you can't wait to read that review, visit www.trentbarton.co.uk today to see what you think.

As usual, links to the featured sites are available at <http://efe.showbus.com/web> and I can be contacted at buses@signal-training.com. Do check out my new site www.workingonthebuses.co.uk. Thanks this month to Nigel McBride for his help.

Left: Where is my nearest bus stop? The new Traveline SouthEast planner has the answers.



Some thoughts of a born again bus driver

Having returned to bus driving after a gap of over 30 years, ALASDAIR DUFFIE considers how the job has changed from the perspective of someone sitting behind the wheel

I drove buses in the late 1960s because I enjoyed it; over 30 years later, I returned to driving of necessity. Those driving continuously for such a period have seen many changes and will say something like *'the job's gone downhill; I enjoyed coming to work, once upon a time'*. I also remember people saying this 35 years ago.

So how does the job compare in the eyes of one jumping straight from Bristol Lodekka FSF to Dennis Dart SLF, knowing nothing of the Bristol VR's heyday and missing most of the National Bus Company regime? This is not an analysis of the entire industry, but a view of one person working in south-east England. Post-millennium, it has been for one 'company' fleet and independents, all serving erstwhile Maidstone & District territory. The ex-M&D depot where I worked was regarded as one of the best on that company and the independents have above-average pay and pleasant country routes; so what I have seen is perhaps about as good as it gets.

We can all convince ourselves that things used to be perfect when they were not. A later improvement was NBC's introduction of pensions, funds subsequently ransacked by the government of the day but now largely restored. Today, most major groups have schemes, but with independents taking over services, there is again no pension for many drivers. There is also no sick pay with many

small operators and some large companies having extended their qualifying periods, e.g. two years for new staff. Even so, drivers becoming ill are often coerced into carrying on because there is no one to cover and the service will be cancelled if you don't. It is academic that you don't get paid; you are not allowed to go sick anyway. People who regularly take two-weeks' paid 'sickies' in addition to their annual holidays might reflect on this.

I cannot compare my incarnations like-for-like as, being a Luddite in my youth, I would never have contemplated one-person operation. Accelerating effortlessly away from a stop in a Dart SLF, setting the next stage on the Wayfarer with a dab of the finger, I think how different this would have been in a Leyland Tiger Cub. Low power and slow gearchange, having to remember all the fares and stages, or look them up each time, reading glasses at the ready for this and the constant adjustment of the Setright's four dials. On the other hand, today's running times, popularly believed to be set on a Kawasaki motorbike at 03.00, often demand all the Dart has to offer, so the poor old Tiger Cub could not even be considered — although perhaps the AEC Reliance could, so long as it didn't boil up.

In 1968, you could keep time without exceeding 25mph on many country services, leaving plenty in hand for delays or if extra

busy. Now, you run at 40-plus or faster if delayed by picking up the odd passenger. No one today wants to travel at 25mph, unless sightseeing, but neither, I suspect, do they like being shaken about. Roads have not improved much in this region and schedules often dictate that maximum safe speed, or perhaps more, is employed just to keep time. Many newer drivers have no idea about timekeeping. They drive flat out and, on the rare occasion that there is time in hand, hang up for a few minutes then race off again; so much for fuel economy. Unachievable running times are sometimes set to avoid any chance of early running, surely a back-to-front way of managing things.

Remember the days when the bell was rung as soon as the last passenger mounted the platform? They seldom fell over as the bus pulled away and usually had their fare ready before they were asked for it. Some people today do not think to have their money or cards ready when they board; they take their time choosing a seat, longer if there are acquaintances with whom to exchange pleasantries on the way, and comment adversely if the driver moves off before they are settled. If the bus is late, boarding passengers will exclaim *'It's freezing out there; I thought you were never coming'*. They don't understand cause and effect.

Left: Could the regular drivers of buses like Maidstone & District AEC Reliance S0277 (277 DKT) cope with today's traffic conditions? This preserved Park Royal-bodied 40-seat semi-coach was photographed in Eastbourne in July 2003. MARK LYONS

Leading from the government's obsession with targets, operators can now be penalised for services that run late. Delays caused by roadworks diversions or the lack of effective parking enforcement? No excuse. You really can't win.

Changed priorities for overhauls

Long ago, buses visited central works every few years. As well as mechanical and electrical units, the body would be overhauled: damaged panels replaced, seats refurbished, sliding window frames rebuilt, door linkages re-bushed, and so on. But even with facilities and procedures in place, the condition of many respected fleets deteriorated in the 1960s. You couldn't get the staff.

Now there are no central workshops. Engines and transmissions give long service before needing attention and it is considered preferable to purchase exchange units from commercial reconditioners. All well and good, but what about the rest of the vehicle? Apart from routine servicing, there is little preventive maintenance; items stay in place until they fail. Accountants will say this is the most economic option, but do they quantify the inconvenience when the bus is rendered unserviceable by a worn-out wiper motor or won't start because of burnt switch contacts?

Non-runners are nothing new, but in earlier times there were depots not many miles apart with spare buses and from which fitters could be summoned quickly. In the 1960s, there were journeys cancelled through driver shortage, but I don't remember 'no bus available', something unremarkable today. Having fewer depots means that it takes longer to attend breakdowns, not to mention the wasteful dead mileage starting and finishing the day's running. There are also the items that do not fail, but just become a nuisance. In the days of overhauls, neither passenger nor driver would notice much difference between two and 12-year-old vehicles. Now, the staccato rattling of doors and cab windows of a 10-year-old bus on indifferent road surfaces is enough to make the driver temporarily — maybe even permanently — deaf, I fear.

In summer, relief workings were common, and there is still demand in certain cases. An inspector used to see away the last bus at night

and send a relief as far as required. On last inward runs, the conductor had to phone if a relief was needed. Now, there are few inspectors and no reliefs. If there are too many passengers, the driver is torn between overloading or leaving some behind.

During the 1950s, despite falling passenger numbers, it was thought worthwhile to build new bus stations, providing comfortable waiting areas for passengers, with refreshment facilities, staff mess rooms and inspectors' offices, where travel information could be obtained. Terminating services unloaded in safety and waited until the time for the return working. Most have closed since the 1980s, when land values trumped other considerations, so the terminus might now be an ordinary bus stop in a busy shopping street. The passenger might, if lucky, have a shelter under which to dodge the elements; there might even be an up-to-date timetable. If not, there will be no one to ask. As well as illegally parked cars, busy shopping streets attract large vans. Often, the only place they can unload is on a bus stop; so where does the bus wait then?

Memo to local authorities: why mark out bus and taxi-only routes then not enforce them, ditto bus stops; why create raised paving areas in the carriageway, which give the impression of being pedestrian-only areas, when they are not; why put pedestrian crossings on curved sections of road too narrow for two buses to pass?

Timetables and free travel

In NBC's day and before, bus companies maintained their own timetable cases at stops. With deregulation, there was reluctance to display upstarts' timetables, so often their information could only be distributed by their drivers. Many years later and with more services run by council tender, there is a larger proportion run by small companies than main operators. Details of one service I worked in Kent were still not posted at several locations after two years.

East Sussex County Council distributes neat timetable leaflets and, in country areas, maintains timetables at bus stops, but using a format that many find confusing. Erroneous, misleading or no information at all is frustrating, particularly when passengers miss the bus, and it is quite understandable that they might wish to complain; but to whom? The operator? I've never noticed the name on the bus. The council? No, what has it got to do with buses? I know who's to blame. The driver on the next bus to turn up.

A recent development is free travel for the over-60s. Previously, councils issued concession cards for half-price travel, and most who used them were happy with that. There are now many concessionary travellers who have never been near a bus before. They hail the bus to ride to the next stop, where they would have walked when the fare was 35p; they catch a bus home from the midday session at the pub, but would have ordered a taxi when the bus fare was the price of a half-pint.

There are also those who were too proud to use the bus before, but have no inhibitions now they are free. In my experience, these are most likely to complain about the service; fare-paying passengers usually taking things in their stride. Free travel might be laudable, but on what premise is it based? Is it fair that a working mother, who sees her retirement age slipping farther into the future, should pay an inflated fare for the privilege of standing, the seats taken by today's early-retired, exercising their 'right' to a free trip to the coast? In fact, nothing in life is free; someone pays. A coincidence perhaps, but council-supported evening journeys are already being cut; let's increase bus usage by withdrawing services. Here's a revolutionary idea: use subsidies to make it worthwhile for *everyone* to use the bus. From the Latin, 'omnibus' means 'for all'; well, it used to.

Many passengers will have met a surly and unhelpful driver at some stage and might think this a general characteristic. Do companies select bad tempered staff, or is this a result

Right: A later incarnation of Maidstone & District in Tunbridge Wells in December 1998, by which time it was part of Arriva. This is 3151 (L500 DKT), a Wadham Stringer Portsdown-bodied Dennis Dart acquired the previous year with the bus operations of Wealden Beeline. ALAN MILLAR



Right: Typifying the rise of independent bus operation — albeit in East Kent rather than former M&D territory — is N613 YRA, one of three ex-Nottingham Volvo B10B-58s with Alexander Strider bodies acquired recently by Poynter's of Wye, a company of which Alasdair Duffie has no experience. The location is Canterbury. **RICHARD GODFREY**



of being in the job? Many passengers are less than courteous themselves; so who is the chicken and who is the egg?

Aggressive car drivers

The aggression shown by a large proportion of road users can be very wearing; a bus driver who responded in kind would not last long. The Highway Code urges motorists to allow buses to pull out where safe to do so, but few do this. Usually, a continuous stream overtakes the waiting bus, even in the face of oncoming traffic; better risk a head-on smash than be behind a bus. In America, all traffic has to stop when a school bus stops to load or unload; here, car drivers hoot to show their anger at being baulked in their headlong rush. Owners of this year's biggest sports utility vehicles on the school run ('I need this car for my children's safety') might curse the bus driver for being in the way. But the bus will be collecting 70 other people's children; is *their* safety less important?

Historically, conductors often made their tea money out of the takings. For years now, many services have never seen inspectors and collusion has developed between some drivers and passengers where bargain fares are paid without ticket issue. For 'tea money' read 'new car money'. The driver trying to do the job properly is faced with 'They always charge me £1 — I don't want a ticket'. Our driver may engage in argument, which in turn delays the bus, or choose a quiet life, which also helps the bank balance. Some might not find this choice difficult, particularly where managements, perhaps through lethargy — or, dare I say, passive complicity — do little to support their staff in the conduct of their duties.

If employers wish their staff to treat customers with consideration and respect, they should extend the same towards their staff. Everyone is different, with differing levels of intellect, ability and probity. Many managers find it easier to talk down to everyone, thereby insulting those who already carry out their duties properly, than deal with those who fall short.

Driving is not a bad job, particularly if you are thick skinned. But thick skin works both ways, in which case no one should expect too much in return. On the other hand, if we want public transport, and employment therein, to be more than a last resort, the problems need to be addressed.

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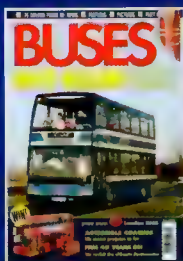
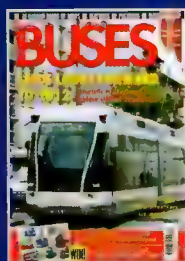
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Vol 10	1989/90	Bristol, Dudley, Russlip, Marble Arch, Brighton, St.Albans, Sheffield, Barnsley, Southend, Birmingham and Coventry.
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Buses in the hills and dales of Britain



Left: Arriva Cymru's surviving open-top Eastern Coach Works-bodied Bristol VRT, 3992 (YMB 512W), remains in service 26 years after delivery as covered top Crosville DVG512. In this picture taken last October, a few hardy souls are braving the elements upstairs on a Snowdon Sherpa service in Nantygwryd between Capel Curig and Pen-y-Pass. **JEREMY HUGHES**

Below left: First West Yorkshire 30705 (G620 OWR), a lowheight Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian new to Yorkshire Rider, near Ripton Village in March this year on the 25-mile Bradford-Harrogate service. **DANIEL STAZICKER**

Right: West Coast Motors SF54 HWA, a Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario, at Lochgoilhead on the lengthy route between Dunoon and Carrick Castle on which it clocks up 6,000 miles a month and returns an impressive 16mpg fuel consumption. In the days of MacBrayne's buses, Lochgoilhead and Carrick Castle were served by a feeder bus connecting with the Campbeltown-Glasgow route, which West Coast operates today as part of the Scottish Citylink network. **DONALD BOOTH**



Below: Hulley's of Baslow Optare Solo 10 (MX56 ACF) at the Blue John Cavern and gem mine at the top of the Winnats Pass, near Castleton in Derbyshire. Blue John is a rare mineral found only in 14 veins of limestone around Castleton, eight of them in this cavern. Although discovered by the Romans 2,000 years ago, Blue John was named as recently as the 18th century. Route 260 operates hourly on Sundays and bank holiday Mondays between Edale railway station and Castleton. **IAN MOORCROFT**





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Independents will survive as a species

I refer to your editorial comment in last month's *Buses*. Independent operators have been selling out to others for the past 80 years. It's nothing new and while the pace may have temporarily accelerated, the species is not threatened.

Some have gone because after 20 years of deregulation it's no longer possible to run fleets of poorly maintained old bangers and the demise of this type of operator has to be good news for everyone. The higher costs associated with a fleet replacement programme will drive some people out of the market.

It's hard work running a small bus business and this will take its toll of people, but the recent expansion of companies such as Western Greyhound, Norfolk Green, Centrebus, D&G and Countryliner has more than replaced the losses outside the PTE areas.

Until the large groups have a strategy for running their less profitable operations, there will be a place for the smaller firm. The emergence of Veolia is a change, but it has spent serious sums of money buying disparate independents and seems to want to expand by submitting low tender bids. This is not new and time will tell if its business model works. However, in the meantime we should be delighted that the French taxpayer is subsidising rural bus services in England and Wales, and enabling several people to retire more wealthy than they would otherwise have been.

Go North East has acquired two private operators for low cost operations. Again this is not new and has been done a hundred times since 1986. However, the corporate culture soon seeps in, costs rise and they get bored with their new toy.

I have been running buses in the private sector since 1979 and while it is more difficult and certainly less fun than 20 years ago, the opportunities are still there and I am sure the private sector will keep bus enthusiasts amused for the foreseeable future. The killer would be further regulation, and probably the law of unintended consequences would apply. The recent concessionary fares legislation has been a nightmare for small firms and many have lost out financially as a result. Whether this does cause more exits from the market will become apparent in the next 12 months

Julian Peddle
Uttoxeter, Staffordshire

Ill-ventilated double-deckers

Did my eyes deceive me? Sadly I think they did. When I first looked at the First Devon & Cornwall Trident refurbished for the Mayflower Link Plymouth-Dartmouth service (*Buses* May, p7), I thought — heaven be praised — that the refurbishment included top-opening windows

across the front of the upper-deck windscreen.

This feature is much missed on today's double-deckers, especially as the huge swathes of glass act as dreadful suntraps, this being the downside of securing better views. On second viewing, it looks as though what appears to be opening windows is merely part of the tree deflector apparatus stretched across the windscreen. Shame.

Why hasn't First increased the number of side-opening windows as part of the refurbishment? These Tridents have pitifully few openers. I well remember them in north-east London and the upstairs front seats were like a microwave. First's Simon Newport says the buses will 'let you enjoy the best views from the top deck'. True, but I wouldn't relish sitting at the front upstairs in this summer's heat wave, promised to be fiercer than last year's shocker.

Another example of management not travelling on its own buses, perhaps? Or is it because the refurbishment was carried out well north of Watford in chilly Rotherham?

Neil Babbs
Enfield

Disabled reader supports heritage Routemaster operation

Having read the article 'Heritage RM attack is foolish and ungrateful' (*In London*, May), I was not sure if this should have been in the April edition as an April Fool, but I guess it's not as April *Buses* included an April Fool, which was very good by the way.

So the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has told Transport for London that 'we're not happy about the heritage routes'. Oh please, there are 10 Routemasters out of 7,000 buses in London (as stated in the article). What's the

problem, then? It's not as if there are 7,000 Routemasters and 10 easy access buses. I have to ask what more does the DRC want? Shall we scrap the Routemaster? Scrap all step entrance buses?

Let's go a bit farther, shall we? Let's turn our attention to our buildings. Come on, let's knock down Westminster Abbey and build a wheelchair accessible abbey? Maybe we should flatten the countryside. I know, let's have a chairlift on the outside of the Tower of London.

Before anyone writes in and complains about this letter, let me explain that I am disabled and in a wheelchair and I don't expect everything to be made accessible to me. I enjoy the Routemaster. I enjoy old buildings. Some disabled people think the country should bend over backwards. It gives disabled people a bad name. I, for one, don't want access everywhere, I don't want the Routemaster being forced off our streets. Everything old is part of our history. The DRC needs to get its priorities right, like discrimination in the workplace.

Shaun Kerr
Bournemouth

Support for John Aldridge's view on heritage RMs

I am writing in response to the letter from Jim Ryan (*You Write* last month) and his comments about your *In London* columnist, John Aldridge.

Mr Ryan states that he 'realises we live in a country where people are entitled to speak their mind', although it would appear that he feels this should apply only to those whose opinions are acceptable to him. Unfortunately, we now live in a country where the needs and views of the majority are often trampled by a blinkered desire to meet the perceived (rather than actual) needs of a minority without regard for such inconveniences as practicality, commonsense or, in many cases, the views of that minority. Any dissenting voices are censored by hysterical rants, of which Mr Ryan provides a good

Below: Refurbished First Devon & Cornwall Dennis Trident 32846 (T846 LLC) in Bretonside bus station, Plymouth. As Neil Babbs observes, a lateral part of the tree deflector stretches across the top of the upper deck windscreen of its Plaxton President body. MARK BAILEY



example. The only objective of such a response is to stifle debate and ultimately this can be damaging to both sides.

John Aldridge's feature is headed 'news and views' and he should not face any censure for expressing his opinions in such a piece. I would be most disappointed should he be forced to write any form of apology for his article, which was quite clearly questioning the motives of the Disability Rights Commission rather than criticising or demeaning disabled people in any way.

The fact that *Buses* strives to be balanced in its content is borne out by your publication of Mr Ryan's letter and if he chooses to cancel his subscription then that will be his loss. I, for one, would rather the matter was debated openly, for it is an important one.

**Clive Lawrence
Redhill**

Let's have more informed, balanced comment

To paraphrase Jim Ryan (You Write, June), it is surely he who has reinforced negative stereotypes of the disabled. John Aldridge took just three paragraphs to comment on a recent statement from the Disability Rights Commission. Despite its much greater length, Mr Ryan's response ignores the two valid reasons John Aldridge cited for taking issue with the commission and instead descends into a fact devoid diatribe about 'shock', 'dismay', 'hurt' and 'humiliation' and goes on to suggest that our 'malicious' London columnist would be more suited to writing for *The Sun* or *Nuts*.

Take off your blinkers, Mr Ryan: we're talking about a token number of historic vehicles used on a couple of tourist services because a lot of people like them. The implication that the mobility of the disabled population is significantly reduced as a consequence is arrant nonsense. It's little wonder that James Curry and many others lose sympathy for the cause of the disabled when constructive criticism is so often met with bluster, emotion and personal vilification rather than logical argument.

I've been reading *Buses* for even longer than Mr Ryan. In past years, the magazine could at times be rather bland, as a result of trying too hard not to offend manufacturers, operators or pressure groups. Its present editor takes a more robust stance and *Buses* is much the better for it. Yes, these vested interests still enjoy blanket coverage of their new products, initiatives and rebranding exercises, but we also get some of what is nowadays a rare commodity: informed and balanced comment and analysis that defies political correctness. We need more of this, not less: it would be a sad day if threats from Mr Ryan and his like were to succeed in suppressing any opinions at variance with their own.

**Stuart McPherson
Dunblane**

DRC risks prompting a backlash

A civilised society should do all that is reasonable to alleviate the problems of access and mobility facing the handicapped. I use the term 'reasonable' advisedly for, despite the touching belief of many aspiring (and some practising) politicians, there ain't no such thing as a free lunch. There is a cost to be borne by the rest of the community. Not just the financial cost to be met by passengers or taxpayers but the loss of some convenience such as described by James Curry (You Write last month).

There has, therefore, to be a balance and John Aldridge was quite correct to criticise the Disability Rights Commission for complaining about the Routemaster heritage service. It is well nigh impossible for us able bodied to appreciate the frustration and anger at being confined to a wheelchair and one can sympathise with Jim Ryan's concern that the advantages so recently gained might be eroded. But on calmer reflection, perhaps he would agree that a few non-accessible buses operating what is essentially a tourist oriented service over routes where there are frequent fully accessible alternatives poses no threat to the disabled.

By making what many fair-minded people might consider an excessive and unreasonable demand, the DRC could be doing a disservice to the cause it espouses by prompting a backlash.

**John Whittle
Carlisle**

TfL should invest in new trolleybuses

I refer to the so-called 'hybrid' bus that has recently operated on my local route 141 (Palmer's Green-London Bridge), as featured in May in London. The local press has been full of hype for what it refers to as 'an electric bus', but this is nothing new. I seem to recall that the 141's predecessor, route 641 (Winchmore Hill-London Bridge) was worked successfully by 'electric buses' from 1938 until 1961. They were called trolleybuses, were virtually silent and caused no pollution. And before them, electric vehicles known as trams plied the same route from the early part of the last century until 1938.

Presumably, the likes of Messrs Hendy and Co. at Transport for London will not want to know about this, especially since, as your article on the hybrid states, the Cumulo Citybus that worked from Palmer's Green Garage just 20 years ago has also been overlooked in official circles. If these people really want to see London's road passenger transport services operated by quiet, pollution-free vehicles that can be introduced with minimal cost and disruption to other road users, then surely trolleybuses are the answer, rather than tram systems that can be expensive and disruptive to implement and noisy to operate. Just ask residents living near some of the recently introduced tramways, for example in Nottingham.

I appreciate that in the old days trolleybus infrastructure — particularly complicated overhead junctions at places like Holloway, Nag's Head or Manor House, could be visually

intrusive, but I am sure such difficulties could be minimised with today's technology.

**Jim Blake
Chairman, North London Transport Society**

Graduates in the bus industry

Further to Douglas Robertson (You Write, May) and Colin Martin's letter last month, I wish to assure Mr Robertson I do not live in the past, but both correspondents have ignored two principal points in my response to Ken Cameron's article in March *Buses*.

One is the balance in any management team between outgoing and inward-looking personalities, both of which are essential to ensure that a team can cover all eventualities that may be thrown at it. Sadly, assessment centres often regard as weak those potential managers who do not force their personalities on to other participants during group training exercises, but instead think twice before opening their mouths. These people do so because they want to ensure they are correct, and their less abrasive attitude often makes them more approachable and is an essential ingredient of a successful management team.

My other point concerned the steady erosion of a caring staff function in many concerns. I recognise that the volume of employment legislation demands a specialist function, but I am saddened that Mr Robertson '*does not know, or want to know the intricacies of paternal leave, etc*'. My experience is that more difficult staff do know the law and their rights back to front, and you have to match that with coalface knowledge. All human relations theory will tell you to treat staff with respect and listen to them; the trick in management is to do it rather than delegate elsewhere, and Mr Robertson's comments give me no confidence that he practises this. The recruitment issues faced by the bus industry have macro economic factors, but once recruited, retention is vital and one of the factors here is how you are treated.

Let me reassure Mr Martin that I do not have a small-minded attitude towards graduates. Some are very good, but many believe that because they are graduates they are automatically better than those who are not. Experience counts regardless of your academic status, but then only those with experience are likely to know this and my definition of experience is at least 25 years to reach anywhere near the top of the learning curve.

**Harry L. Barker,
Tarporey, Cheshire**

The real transport issue about old and new counties

Tim Hall and Barry Doe's ticking off (You Write last month) that Leigh is in Greater Manchester is trivial and unhelpful because it fails to express any understanding that traditional English counties are important to ►



many people and are part of our long history and socio-geographical identities.

Using traditional county names represents an aspiration to reject artificially created entities such as Greater Manchester, while keeping local councils with which people do identify. That Wigan is in Greater Manchester but Warrington is not merely reflects political expediency and gerrymandering in the 1970s from which we are still suffering the consequences. Politicians could legislate, say, that Cheshire is in North Wales, but it wouldn't make it so.

What should concern those of us who care about public transport are the devastating effects that the creation of metropolitan counties and Greater London had on cross-border bus services, funding and integration. Two brief examples: Ashford and Staines in Middlesex, part of west London suburbia, were once wholly in London Transport's central red bus area. They were gerrymandered into Surrey when LT was put under Greater London Council control in 1970 and a 'Berlin Wall' was erected between Greater London and Surrey, with LT bus services outside the GLC area decimated.

In north-west England, Warrington was not included in Greater Manchester and 'moved' to Cheshire, and many of the benefits of meaningful integration and funding from Greater Manchester PTE were lost. Today, many benefits could be regained by there being one, larger PTA/PTE with representation from all urban district authorities in south Lancashire and north Cheshire: how about calling it Solnoc? Greater Manchester and Merseyside would then be irrelevant and we would happily agree that St

Helens was in Lancashire and Stockport was in Cheshire, as indeed they really are.

**Dr Les Burwood
Winchester**

Leigh was never in Greater Manchester

I read with interest the statements of your correspondents (both of whom reside outside Lancashire) that Leigh was not in Lancashire.

In a nutshell, Greater Manchester County was an administrative county and not a geographical county. This is overlooked by many who regard administrative areas (often called 'counties', e.g. Cumbria) in the same light as geographical counties. When Greater Manchester was created, the government confirmed (a point that was re-affirmed by successive governments) that traditional county boundaries remained unaltered, i.e. no one had actually moved from Lancashire into Greater Manchester, which (despite the title of county) was simply an administrative area of Lancashire.

When the county council was abolished, the services it operated on behalf of the constituent authorities became unitary authorities in their own right (e.g. Greater Manchester Fire Service, Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Transport), financed by the former councils within this administrative area.

The former administrative boundary was retained (i.e. the Greater Manchester County boundary) to define the area in which these unitary authorities would operate. The councils within this administrative area also became

unitary authorities. Although these authorities together are known as the Greater Manchester Councils, this is just in an administrative capacity. Greater Manchester County no longer exists (it has disappeared from Ordnance Survey maps) and was replaced by these unitary authorities. Leigh has always been in Lancashire, and describing Leigh as a Lancashire town is entirely correct.

**Peter Gould
Bury**

Counties are accepted names round Greater London

I would appreciate being allowed to explain to Barry Doe (You Write last month) about the use of county names and the difference between an accepted geographical location and a municipal administrative district.

The London government reorganisation effective from 1 April 1965 did indeed create new council administrative districts and, for example, Middlesex ceased to be a county council while other counties lost those parts of their municipal areas that fell within the Greater London Council's administrative area. These included Essex (where I live) and Kent. There were others all round London.

What Mr Doe doesn't appreciate is that the postal county names of Middlesex, Essex, Kent etc remained and still do today. The most common reference the vast majority of people make to where their home is situated is their postal address. Thus, Bromley, Kent is the

FENTON FILE

MIKE FENTON finds an unusual height and wheelbase combination on one of eight East Lincs Pioneer-bodied Volvo Olympians with Strathtay

Some bus company liveries are quite distinctive and one of my favourites has to be that of

Strathtay Scottish, destined to disappear before too long following the acquisition of the

company by Stagecoach at the end 2005. At least this provides me with the perfect excuse for featuring another Strathtay bus — a Volvo Olympian with an East Lincs Pioneer body. On the face of it, that might not sound too interesting and you could be wondering what is unusual about such a vehicle. True to form, East Lincs built bodies of several styles on Volvo Olympian chassis with further variety provided by the choice of a long or short

wheelbase, single or dual doors and full or lowheight bodywork. As far as I am aware, Strathtay was the only operator to take the combination of lowheight Pioneer body on short (4.953m) wheelbase chassis, a total of eight 72-seaters entering service in 1998 with R or S-prefix registrations as Strathtay 955-62.

My illustration shows 955 (R955 TSL) at the junction of Commercial Street and Seagate, Dundee in June 2004 when the city was notable in being one of those uncommon places having local services provided by two main operators, neither of which belonged to one of the big three of Arriva, First or Stagecoach. In the background can be seen an Alexander-bodied Volvo B7TL of the city's other operator, National Express-owned Travel Dundee.



location people in that town use, refer to and give to others. Likewise, Ashford and Enfield are both in Middlesex, Richmond is in Surrey, Romford and Upminster are in Essex. When I am asked where I come from, I say Romford in Essex. I do not say Havering in Greater London nor, to my knowledge, do my friends or family.

Ray Grande
Harold Wood, Essex

Blame it on the Post Office

In support of Barry Doe, the culprit in all this confusion and inaccuracy is the Post Office, which was so riddled with inertia in 1965 that it could not (and still cannot) change its ways to recognise Greater London, the nation's capital. Of the 8million inhabitants of Greater London, probably half could not tell you correctly in which county they live.

Ted Relton
Kesgrave, Suffolk

Still very much Lancastrians

I must take issue with almost everything that your correspondent Tim Hall says (You Write last month). The Local Government Act 1972, which led to the abolition of administrative counties and the setting up of new ones, in no way abolished the traditional geographical counties, which

'continue to exist for other purposes' (*Department of the Environment statement 1991*).

In any case, the new metropolitan counties lasted only 12 years before being abolished. The seven metropolitan districts that make up the Greater Manchester area are still geographically within the County Palatine of Lancaster, as are the unitary authorities of Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and the City of Preston, just as the old county boroughs were within and part of the County of Lancashire although not administered by the then county council.

It is thus correct to speak of Leigh, Warrington and Widnes as being Lancashire towns, as well as Salford, Manchester, Rochdale, Bolton etc, and in the north Barrow-in-Furness. Perhaps Tim Hall would care to come up from London and risk telling the inhabitants of these places that they are not Lancastrians.

It would also be unrealistic for new companies to replicate old ones completely, even if they use the same name (York Pullman is a good example in last month's *Buses*). Stagecoach and FirstGroup are to be applauded for recreating the liveries of their former constituent operators, as relief from their corporate identities. We couldn't expect them to produce the actual vehicles — that is the responsibility and privilege of the preservation movement. It was a joy for people here to see Olympians in Wigan, Bolton and Salford

colours. Some of them even thought that the old buses had returned.

I found the article on Leigh excellent (but then it was by Peter Hesketh), and it would have been severely marred had it maintained the fiction (upheld unfortunately in so many other places) that metropolitan counties still exist.

Fr David Sutton
Eccles, Manchester

Saddened by nit-picking

As a former priest-in-charge of Leigh Parish Church, I enjoyed Peter Hesketh's article about bus services in Leigh in May *Buses*, but was saddened by the nit-picking letters about it (You Write last month) from Tim Hall and Barry Doe.

My impression is that most people there see themselves as Lancastrians and not Mancunians. Indeed, many like to see their post addressed to them as living in Lancashire. To criticise Green Triangle for using the fleetname South Lancashire Travel is petty in the extreme: Lancashire United Transport did not change its name when Greater Manchester was created.

Finally, please do not change your policy about the observance of April Fools' Day. We anoraks have got to learn to take our hobby and ourselves a little less seriously.

Rev Terry Challis
Cleveleys, Lancs



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BUSES



'In flight' magazine that isn't always available 'in flight'

JULIAN OSBORNE likes the idea behind Stagecoach's customer magazine for its flagship Coastliner 700, but has difficulty finding any copies on its buses

Much bus publicity is about telling folk where buses go when — and sometimes for how much. Essential stuff. More enlightened operators also seek to capture the wider imagination and make buses seem part of everybody's experience; this can be additional information with the timetables or a magazine — similar to airline and train 'in flight' publications — or more subtle stuff like naming your buses after deceased local celebrities and getting people so intrigued that you can then sell them a book telling them more about the people.

Asked by the editor to check out a free magazine launched by Stagecoach South for its Coastliner 700 service, I boarded Trident 18519 and looked around for one. The press release said drivers on the route were reporting the magazine well received by customers, so a bus seemed the place to find one. But there didn't appear to be

any on this one. I checked out various other 700s (from outside, to save money — and they often come in twos which speeded up the process) and still couldn't see any.

Undeterred, I went into the office at Worthing and was pointed to copies on the racks. My sister, with whom I was making this search, was not convinced it was a magazine — more like an advertising flyer, she said. Its half-A4 (vertically) shape and mere 20 pages (including the covers) caused this, I think. She was being perceptive as main outlets for the magazine are, I subsequently discovered, bus stations, offices, tourist centres and mailshots — targeting potential new customers as much as existing ones. Some will be available on buses, but apparently at the drivers' discretion.

A handy little document

It's a handy little document with information about the route, the timetable, the towns served, special events and the many ticket deals available (not just for bus travel: many local attractions have discounted access deals for Coastliner 700 passengers).

I was worried that these might be affected by the imminent fare rise indicated in the section on Stagecoach tickets (less than a year after the last one, when child fares went to two-thirds of the adult fare) but I understand that the deals will stand until March next year. Not that the magazine tells you that. I also wondered why the route map doesn't show more connecting services or at least the ones that are mentioned elsewhere in the magazine like the 17 and 63. There's also a kids' page with a cartoon adventure and puzzles.

The magazine contributes well to Stagecoach's continuing project to enhance and promote this flagship route, as did the new Tridents last year and the conversion to 100% (well, 90%) low-floor operation this year. I believe the magazine will encourage even more people on to the service, which is now running every 10min over the eastern part of the route and every 15min on some of the rest; the double-deckers are usually on the full Brighton-Southsea timings.

But until West Sussex County Council delivers the bus priorities along the route that it keeps talking about, Stagecoach's efforts will not reap their just reward: the 700 fights its way through traffic from end to end, struggling to maintain its timetable. Having several route variations all numbered 700 and fare rises at less than yearly intervals doesn't help either.

Stagecoach says that should the demand exist, the magazine will be produced twice a year.

We want to hear from readers, operators and transport authorities about how the industry is tackling the challenge of imparting accessible information to the travelling public — whether in timetables, leaflets or maps, at bus stops, bus stations or on the Internet. If you find items of interest (tell us about the good just as much as about the bad) and could write about 600 words on the subject, accompanied by photographs and/or publicity material, please contact the Editor at the Leven address shown on p2 or send an e-mail to buseseditor@btconnect.com



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IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **Arriva Southern Counties buys Temsa coach**
- **Eddie Brown starts bus operation**
- **Ipswich Buses revives hybrid Solo**
- **Travel West Midlands places big bus orders**
- **Wiltax takes over most of Surrey Connect**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in *italic* type (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, *VLT 48*), with the most recent given first.

A1, Stretton, Warrington

Some services operated by Ogden, St Helens were taken over in February, along with Dennis Dart SLF/UVG UrbanStar R554 UOT and Dart SLF/Marshall Capital R402/3/7 XFL.

A1A Travel, Birkenhead

New Euro4-engined Optare Solo M710SEs 47/8 (MX07 JNZ, JOA) have replaced Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts KP51 SXX, UFJ.

A2Z Travel, Walsall

Notable additions to this rapidly expanding fleet are ex-Stagecoach Grimsby Cleethorpes Dennis Lance/East Lancs EL2000 B45F 701-4/6-9 (K701-4 NDO, L706-9 HFU) and ex-TM Travel, Chesterfield DAF SB220/Optare Delta 127 (J26 GCX).

Dennis Lance SLF/Wright Pathfinder ODZ 8903 has been cannibalised.

Abbey Coaches, Middlesbrough

Acquired are Dennis Dart/Carlyle H107 MOB from Birmingham Motor Traction and Volvo B10M/Plaxton KX1 510.

Leyland National VIW 6243 (LMA 411P) and Leyland Leopard/Plaxton WSV 517 (EWW 212T) have been scrapped after use by Cleveland Fire Brigade for rescue exercises. Leopard/Plaxton CTD 133V (89 HBC) has also been scrapped.

ACE Travel, Aintree

Optare Solo MX54 WMJ is numbered 706.

Aintree Coachline, Bootle

Former Dublin Bus Leyland Olympians 92 D 151 and 93 D 10175 have been re-registered K100 ACL and L100 ACL respectively.

Alfa, Euxton, Lancs

New Volvo B12B/Plaxton Paragons PN07 LLE-G/J/K are numbered 41-5.

Alpine, Llandudno

Bristol VRT JMB 406T has been reinstated, but PCA 419V is withdrawn.

Ambassador Travel, Great Yarmouth

Plaxton Derwent-rebodied Leyland Leopards HIL 2141-3/5 have been withdrawn. Leyland National Greenway TCW 898T, ex-Semence Bedford YNT/Plaxton Paramount 149 GJF, Iveco Daily G407 DPD and an unidentified Bova Futura have gone for scrap.

Below: Walsall-based A2Z Travel, which reverses its name on the bus fleet, has acquired all eight East Lancs-bodied Dennis Lances withdrawn recently from the Stagecoach Grimsby Cleethorpes fleet. Wearing a hybrid livery in which Stagecoach's orange and red swoops on the sides have been repainted dark blue is 708 (L708 HFU), one of four new in 1993 shortly after Stagecoach bought the council-owned Grimsby Cleethorpes Transport company. **TONY HUNTER**



Amos, Eydon, Northants

Ex-Isle of Man all-Leyland Olympian/H47/31F 108 (BMN 85G) has been re-registered F876 ENV and resealed to H46/31F.

Arriva Cymru AA

Eighteen VDL SB200/Wright Pulsars are due for service 12 (Rhyl-Llandudno), replacing the V-DJC Dennis Darts on the service from new. These may include three buses listed this month under Arriva North West.

Arriva London AA

Four more Wright Gemini HEV hybrid double-deckers are on order. New are Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart/B29D ENL1-9 (LJ07 ECW-Z, EDC/F, EBO/P/U) for Croydon Tramlink connecting service T31, while the first two of the 10 Volvo B9TL/East Lancs Visionaire open-top double-deckers for **The Original Tour** are VLE611-2 (LJ07 XEO/P).

Fire-damaged DAF DB250/Alexander ALX400 DLA308 (Y508 UGC) has been written off.

Arriva Midlands AA

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B34F K817 NKH is another transferred from Arriva North West.

Leyland National 62 (BYW 366V) was sold to RML Travel, Burslem in the auction of ex-Chase Bus Services vehicles on 19 May.

Arriva North East AA

Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider B51F 401 (K401 HWW) arrived at Northumbria (Jesmond) in May on loan from Arriva Yorkshire. A second one may follow.

Optare MetroRider MR17/B29F 2756 (P220 SGB) was transferred from Arriva Scotland West in February.

Scania L113CRL/East Lancs 273 (P273 VRG) is likely to be written off following serious accident damage. DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4015 (K415 BHN) has been reinstated to cover for it.

Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer 4534/5/40 (L219/20/33 TKA), the last B6s at Bishop Auckland, have been withdrawn. MCW Metrobuses 625/9 (C354 BUV, B89 WUL) and MAN 11.190/Optare Vecta 1520 (L520 FHN) have gone to Wigley (dealer), Carlton for scrap.

Arriva North West AA

Recent deliveries of Wright-bodied VDL SB120s and SB200s (Fleet News, March refers) have been stored out of service and re-registered with 07 plates. The SB200/Commander B44F are now 2621-8 (CX07 COU, CPE/F/K/N/O/U/V), while the SB120/Cadet B39F are 2629-41 (CX07 CPY/Z, CRF/J/K/M/V/Z, CSF/O/U/V/Y). Some of the Cadets have entered service at Bootle. SB200/Wright Pulsar prototype 2620 (CX56 EKD) has been reregistered CX07 COJ and further examples



Left: VLE613 (LJ07 XEP), one of 10 East Lancs Visionaire-bodied Volvo B9TL open-toppers for Arriva's The Original Tour London sightseeing operation, carrying tourists through Piccadilly Circus on its first weekend in service. Their bonded glazing gives them a more coach-like appearance than the first Visionaire for Dublin, illustrated on p65. **MARK LYONS**

Dennis Dart/Northern Counties B35F L112 YVK is ex-Arriva Southend. Mercedes-Benz 709Ds K864/74 ODY have been sold.

Atkinson, Ingleby Arncliffe, Co Durham
Leyland Olympians CUB 70Y, EWY 80Y and HSB 698Y were for sale on eBay in late-April.

Avon, Prenton, Wirral

Two new 9.2m Dennis Dart/MCV Evolution B32F placed in service on 29 May are numbered 107, 207 (AE07 DZS/T).

Banga Travel, Wolverhampton

Recent additions include Mercedes-Benz 811D/Wright F834 RVL, Mercedes 709D/Alexander L742 LWA and, from Baker, Biddulph, Mercedes 811D/Plaxton Beaver G689 OHE, K455 EDT and K963 CNE (K2 SLT).

Bellamy, Bilborough, Notts

Ex-Arriva Merseyside MCV Metrobuses F801-6 YLV are all in yellow as schoolbuses. Ex-Camm Leyland Tiger C40 CWT did not stay; it was sold on to ECH Travel, Nottingham, for spares. Dennis Dominators C131 CAT, C282 BBP are for sale, as is TJI 8784. T448 UCH was not among the coaches acquired recently (Fleet News, May).

Belle Vue Coaches, Manchester

Unusual Mercedes-Benz OH1416/Wright Urbanranger B47F L610 OWB, N31 EVT are here from South Lancs, Atherton.

delivered are 2646/9 (CX07 CTO/Y). Former Merseybus Volvo B10B/Alexander Striders 6301-3 (L301-3 TEM) are being converted into training vehicles.

Dennis Dart 1283 (K817 NKH) has been transferred from Chester to Arriva Midlands. Also withdrawn are Darts 1117 (L247 WAG) and 1273 (K73 SRG). Scania N113CRL/Wright Pathfinder 2050 (RDZ 1710) suffered fire damage at Runcorn depot on 23 March and has been delicensed.

Arriva Southend AA

Further to last month's Fleet News, Matthew Arnold, business development manager for Medway, Swale and Southend kindly points out that Mercedes-Benz Vario 1188 (R188 DNM) has not been withdrawn, nor is it planned to be. It may, however, be replaced by a further Dennis Dart or Volvo B6 should one become available from within Arriva Southern Counties, of which Southend is a part. Similarly, the remaining Dennis Dominators, 5286-8 (K36/7 XNE, K38 YVM), are not due for withdrawal, certainly in the immediate future.

He also points out that the Southend business is not being prepared for sale within three years, as reported some time ago.

Arriva Southern Counties AA

The four new VDL DB250LF/East Lancs Millennium Lowlanders due are for Maidstone London Road services. Also expected by the end of June are Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts for Horsham for service 465 (Dorking-Kingston), with six more to follow for Tunbridge Wells in the autumn.

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver B31F 2415 (N175 DWM) has been transferred from Arriva Shires & Essex.

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 1604 (W604 YKN) is still being repaired after an accident last December. Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 6416 (GN04 UEF), damaged by fire at Bluebell Hill on 16 April, is beyond repair and may be replaced in due course.

Dennis Dart/Northern Counties Paladin 3112 (L112 YVK) has been sold to ASD, Strood.

Two coaches for **New Enterprise** at Maidstone are new DAF-powered Temsa Safari HD/C51Ft 2920 (YJ07 JWN) and VDL SB4000XF/Van Hool Alizée T9 C53F 2921 (YJ04 BND), new to Bibby, Ingleton and latterly with Landtourers, Brighton Hill. Also here from the main fleet at Tunbridge Wells is Mercedes-Benz Vario O810/Plaxton Beaver 2 1193 (R193 DNM).

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

New are B33F Optare Solo 2475-7 (YJ07 VPW-Y) for Garston and Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B45F 3868-72 (KE07 EVX/Y, EWA-C) at Stevenage with branding for routes 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Right: One of the new Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs for Arriva the Shires & Essex routes in Stevenage new town, 3869 (KE07 EVY). As with all Euro4-engined Volvos with this body, they are built to European Bus Directive dimensions with a centre offside emergency exit at the rear of the low-floor section. **GLENN KNIGHT**

DAF SB3000/Plaxton coaches 4054, 4363 (R454 SKX, W363 KXK) have been painted in easyBus orange for the joint venture on Green Line 757 (London-Luton Airport).

Leyland Olympian/ECW 5851 (C36 CHM) has been withdrawn at Aylesbury. Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver B31F 2415 (N175 DWM) has been transferred to Arriva Southern Counties.

Arriva Yorkshire AA

Volvo B10B/Wright Endurance 406 (L406 NUA) has been withdrawn with accident damage. B10B/Alexander Strider 401 (K401 HWW) has gone on loan to Arriva North East.

ASD, Strood, Kent

Scania K113CRB/Bekhof Excellence 2000HL C53F TJI 4833 is here from Redwood, Hemyock, Devon, while

Below: Avon Buses 207 (AE07 DZT), numerically the second in a pair of MCV Evolution-bodied Dennis Darts, on its first day in service. **MARK HALDON**



Bennett, Warrington

The first low-floor vehicle for this fleet is R564 UOR, a Dennis Dart SLF/UVG UrbanStar new to Marchwood Motorways and acquired for use on Warrington-Altrincham services taken over from Arriva.

Big Bus Company, London

Former Kowloon Motor Bus three-axle Leyland Olympian/Alexander O59/34D MBO351-6 (E351-6 NUV; EC 1588, 8476, 8262, 6571, 1647, 7483) entered service at Easter; 355 is a partial open-topper. They were converted in Hong Kong before shipping. Former Northern General forward-entrance AEC Routemaster RMF588 (FPT 588C) has been exported to Cancun Supreme, Malta (see p28).

Big Red Bus Company, Wilmington, Devon

This operator began its City Sightseeing open-top tours of Exeter on 26 May, using 1977 ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 VDV 139S new to Devon General and acquired from East Yorkshire last October. It is named *Ark Royal*, the identity it carried when new.

BL Travel, Hemsworth, W Yorks

New Optare Solo M780SE here are registered YJ07 VTG/K.

Blackpool Transport

New 9.5m B33F Optare Solos for commercially operated Line 16 to Fleetwood are 286-93 (YJ07 EJA/C-E/G/K/L/N) in a new Lifestyle Line 16 pale blue/yellow livery with navy trimmings. To prevent confusion Optare MetroRider 593 (N593 LFN), also pale blue/yellow as the one bus for Line 10, has been withdrawn, and newer MetroRider 518 (S518 LHG) is in a new Line 10 dove grey/yellow with red details.

Line 16 replaces the similar Urban Bus Challenge-funded Lifestyle Line L1, for which B28F Solos 277-84 (PL03 BPZ, YG02 FVP/R-U, PN03 UGG/H) were supplied by Blackpool Council (277-82) and Lancashire County Council (283/4). Those buses have been purchased and are being painted out of maroon/cream into black/yellow spare livery (277/8) or Line 2 emerald/yellow (279-84).

Acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) are ex-London Leyland Olympian/ECW half open-toppers 813/8 (D213/8 FYM), 844/9 (D244, 149 FYM) and full open-top 857 (D257 FYM), which are owned by Blackpool Transport, unlike the previous MCW Metrobuses.

DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 115/6 (H115/6 YHG) have been repainted from tramway replacement livery into spare livery, while similar 129/30 (K129/30 UFV) have become driver trainers 969/70 in yellow and royal blue. Leyland Atlantean trainers 922/3 (URN 322/3V) have been withdrawn.

'I'm On The Bus' full news adverts have been applied to Dennis Tridents 305/15/28-32 (PJ02 PYL, PJ03 TFX, PF06 EZL-P).

Blue Triangle, Rainham

MAN C122 BTP is with Florida, Halstead, not this operator, as reported in May Fleet News.

Boulton, Cardington, Shropshire

New Bova Magiq C49Ft YJ07 DVW has replaced previous Bova Futura T274 MAW.

Eddie Brown, Boroughbridge

The first service bus in living memory, if not ever, is SN53 LWR, a TransBus Pointer Dart operated on tendered service 780 (Knaresborough-Wetherby) taken over from Transdev Harrogate & District on 1 May.

Burton, Haverhill TGM

Correcting the May Fleet News, the ex-Classic Coaches Mercedes-Benz Vario is 731 (S131 NRB). Burton also has 730 (S130 NRB).

Buzzlines, Lympne, Kent

Acquired with the business of Smith, Brenzett were Scania K113TRB/Van Hool C49Ft K500, 555 BUS.

The first 13.8m long Neoplan Skyliner for the UK, DD03 BUZ, has been sold to Mott, Aylesbury.

Neoplan Starliner NU03 BUZ has been re-registered GM03 JVE, its registration transferred to Mercedes-Benz Touro RP03 SET. Ford Transit AK04 LFL is re-registered KB04 BUZ.

Caroline Seagull, Great Yarmouth

Ex-Reading Goldline DAF/Van Hool coaches J788 KHD (SB2700/C55F) and R37 GNW (SB3000/C49Ft) have been acquired.



Blackpool Transport 291 (YJ07 EJK) in the Lifestyle Line livery worn by eight of these new Optare Solo M950s operated on this half-hourly service. JACK HOLLINGTON

Right: Preserved 61-year-old Lytham St Annes all-Leyland Titan PD1 19 (GTB 903) of the Lancastrian Transport Trust operating Classic Bus Lancashire's heritage bus service between the two coastal towns on bank holiday Saturday 26 May. MIKE HADDON



Castle Buses, Liverpool

Ex-East London commercial fleet Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 H51/22D T649 KPU has been acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Cavalier, Long Sutton, Lincs

Latest acquisitions are of Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C53F 1104 (P325 VWR) from National Holidays and Dennis Dart SLF/UVG UrbanStar B44F 5337 (R562 UOT). The Dart is in the Huntingdon & District fleet.

Centrebuss

Recently acquired Optare Solos given fleetnumbers are 388-95 (Y38/9 HBT, MX03 YDA, VU02 TSV/X, MX07 JNL/N, BCF); 391/2 are ex-Irvine, Law M850s.

Fire damaged Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart W922 JNF and accident damaged Y451 TBF have been repaired, the latter branded for Chiltern Rambler service 327 (Hemel Hempstead-Tring).

Chalkwell, Sittingbourne

An addition to the fleet is Optare Solo B26F MX04 VLR, ex-Russell, Darwen. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount C53F YIL 7712 has gone to Eastonways, Ramsgate.

Chambers, Bures, Suffolk

Ex-Transdev London Volvo Olympian/Alexander (Belfast) H47/25D R941 YOY has been acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Choice Travel, Wednesfield

Acquired are Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital 145 (S119 RCS), Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts 146/7/59/60 (S582 PGB, W895 AGA, X171 BNH, X209 ONH) and Optare Solos 148/50/5 (X332 ABU, X943 NUB, WL03 AOL).

Mercedes-Benz 811D 56 (GNZ 3461 K221 JNV) has been sold. Mercedes 709D 37 (BHZ 8675, J933 WHJ) and 811D 93 (N472 EHA) have gone to D&G at Crewe

City Circle, Hayes, Middlesex

Further to last month's report, five more of the 10 Volvo B12B/Jonckheere HV C53F for this Heathrow-based operator's fleet are identified as 37-41 (FJ07 VWP/R-U).

City Clipper, Southampton

Plaxton Primo midibus MX07 BCZ had moved on to Raddoneur, Birkenhead by late May.

Classic, Annfield Plain TGM

New in May were three Euro4-engined Scania K-series coaches, 14.1m Berkhof Axial C65Ft-bodied YN07 LHE and 13.75m Irizar C59Ft-bodied YN07 LHF/G.

Classic Bus Lancashire, Blackpool

This associate of the Lancastrian Transport Trust introduced service 12 (Lytham Square-St Annes Square via Lowther Gardens, Fairhaven Lake and The Promenade) on 26 May, running every 20min between 12.00 and 16.20 at weekends and bank holiday Mondays until 30 September. It revives a traditional Lytham St Annes route number and was launched using the LTT's preserved Lytham St Annes 1946 H30/26R-seated all-Leyland Titan PD1, 19 (GTB 903), and its ex-London United AEC Routemaster/Park Royal H40/32R RML2734 (SMK 734F) in London Transport livery. Fylde Vision Local Strategic Partnership and Fylde Borough Council support the service.

Coastal, Newick, E Sussex

The first Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart for this operator is 125 (GX07 AVO). Dennis Dart SLF 120 (GU52 HKB) has been withdrawn for sale.

Further to May Fleet News, operations manager Peter Lockhart advises that Dart SLFs 115-22 have Pointer and not Alexander ALX200 bodies; 115/6 are B29F Mini Pointer Darts and the others are B38F Coastal Coaches now has a website, www.CoastalCoaches.com.

Cook, Wellington

The fleet at the time of the Stagecoach UK Bus takeover (see News this month) comprised the following (in age order):

Dennis Javelin/Berkhof Excellence C51Ft SIL 4465; Mercedes-Benz 410D/Autobus Classique M15 M843 TYC, Mercedes 711D/G&M DP24F PIL 9537, Mercedes 709D/Alexander Sprint B27F N344 OBC, Mercedes 814D/Plaxton Beaver DP33F HBZ 4676, Mercedes 811D/Plaxton Beaver B31F N614 DKR, LDV 200/M8 N917 LRL, Mercedes 814D/G&M DP24F NIL 7278, Mercedes 709D/Alexander Sprint B25F N456/7 VOD, Mercedes 412D/AMC M16 N286 YOA, Mercedes 711D/Onyx DP23F HAZ 3346, LDV Convoy/Walsall Motor Bodies M16 P944 GEG, Mercedes 709D/Plaxton Beaver B27F P210/1 JKK, Mercedes 811D/Plaxton Beaver B31F P232 NKK, Mercedes Vario O814D/Alexander ALX100 B29F P110/5 HCH, Mercedes 412D/Crest DP16F BAZ 7326, Iveco Daily 49.10/Frank Guy M16L R130 XJA, LDV Convoy/G&M M16 S995 BTA, LDV Convoy/Coachsmith M15L T788 RDV, Volkswagen LT35/Onyx M16 T825 OBL, Mercedes Sprinter 412D/Onyx DP16F

JULI 1717, Mercedes Sprinter 412D/Excel M16 NUI 4180, Mercedes Vario O814/Plaxton Cheetah C29F TXI 8761, Mercedes Vario O814/Autobus C25F V8 PCC, Mercedes Vario O814/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F V383 HGG, LDV Convoy/WJW M16 V225 VAL, LDV Convoy/M8 V778 HGG and W637 RYB, Mercedes Sprinter 412D/UVG M14L W578 NNY and 411D X436 CDW, Mercedes Sprinter 411D/UVG M16 X772 CKG, LDV Convoy/Coachsmith M15L Y921 FDV, Mercedes Vario O814/Plaxton Cheetah C33F VIB 9378, Mercedes Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F SF51 PVY and KP51 UFE, LDV Convoy/M16 LB02 YPN, Optare Solo M850/B27F YF02 SKO/V, FWK, LDV Convoy/M16 BU02 ZYN, LDV Convoy/M8 PG04 YKE, Optare Solo M850/B29F YN04 KWN, Optare Solo M990/B35F KX04 HPN/P/U/V/Y/Z, Optare Solo M780/B24F YK05 CAU/V, Optare Solo M990/B35F YJ55 BHL/N/O/P/U/V, Optare Solo M850/B25F YJ06 ATO, Optare Solo M850/B28F YJ06 FYX, FZN, EHK-N.

Countryliner, Guildford

There are three new MAN/MCV Evolutions, MRM7-9 (AE07 DZD-F).

Courtney, Bracknell

New for Windsor park-&-ride work is Optare Solo M710SE SlimLine B21F RK07 KOA. Solo Y812 KDP has gone to Doyle, Ripley.

Crusader, Clacton.

New Setras are tri-axle S416s EU07 FHV-X and two-axle S415s EU07 FHY/Z.

CT Plus (Yorkshire)

Fourteen more Metro-owned BMC Condor 225/B57F schoolbuses here are registered YJ07 VXR-U, VZT-V/X/Y, XMB-F.

D&G, Stoke-on-Trent

Optare Solos acquired are 9 (W82 NDW) for Longton and 175/6 (W291/8 EYG) for Crewe. Mercedes-Benz 709D 21 (JLZ 8845, G977 ARV) has been sold.

Delaine, Bourne

The new Volvo B9TL, 142 (AD07 DBL) *Thomas Arthur Smith* is confirmed by Volvo as the second B9TL to work in the UK; similar 141 (AD56 DBL) *Hugh Delaine-Smith (MBE)* being the first. Both have East Lancs Olympus H47/31F bodywork.

Leyland Tiger/Duple 10 (F603 VEW) passed to a preservationist at the end of last year and Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 134 (ANA 10Y) has gone to the Selneq Preservation Society, Manchester. Similar 131 (ANA 7Y) was used as a source of spares for ANA 10Y and remaining examples in service

Docklands Minibuses GA

LOTS now reports the Dennis Dart/MCV Evolutions as numbered ED1-17 (AE06 HCA/C/D/F-H/J/K, AE56 OUH/J-P/S). Deliveries began of a further 11, ED18-28, in May, of which at least ED20 (LX07 BYL) was in service.

Doyle, Ripley

Optare Solo Y812 KDP has been acquired from Courtney, Bracknell.

Eastonways, Ramsgate

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount C53F YIL 7712 has come from Chalkwell, Sittingbourne.

East London Group

Fire-damaged Dennis Trident 17331 (X331 NNO) is back in service, but 17354 (X354 NNO) has been damaged in an arson attack. Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) has sold Tridents 17048/9 (T648/9 KPU) to Red Route Buses, Northfleet and Castle Buses, Liverpool respectively.

East Yorkshire EY

New are Volvo B12B/Caetano Levante C49FLt 61-7 (YX07 HJC-G/J/K) for National Express work, to be followed by 12.23m Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther Centenary C49FLt 70/1 (YX07 HKN/O) and Volvo

Right: East Yorkshire 896 (G618 OTV), the Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus newly converted to open-top for the Scarborough & District fleet and painted in a mainly cream reversed version of standard fleet livery. New to Trent Buses in 1989, it was acquired by EYMS-owned Finglands 10 years later. **STEPHEN WHITELEY**

B9TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers 714-21 (YX07 HKA-H).

Transferred to Hull from Whittle, Kidderminster is Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B38F 297 (S250 XUY), while Volvo B10M/Alexander PS 219 (M419 RRN) and Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 461 (W461 UAG) have gone in the opposite direction.

Bristol VRT open-topper 838 (VDV 138S) is back in service this summer, while ex-Finglands open-top Volvo Citybus 896 (G618 OTV) — the only one of the four not to carry an advertising livery — has been repainted in a reversed livery with more cream than maroon.

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 33-5 (G433-5 MWU) are re-registered 1918 KH, 794 EYD, 95 EYM respectively, while Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther 56/7 (YX55 FVB/C) are A6, 7 EYC.

Ex-Frodingham Coaches MAN 18.350/Neoplan Transliner 93 (A10 EYC) and ex-Finglands Volvo Citybus 893 (F609 GVO) have been sold.

Edwards, Llantwit Fardre

Three-axle 13m Setra S416GT-HD C49FLt BX07 NMA/O/U are new; as mentioned last month, BX07 NMO is 2007 Coach of the Year. Scania/irizar Y36-8 HHE were part exchanged for them. Three further ex-Ulsterbus Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Premiere 350s acquired for the school fleet are EAZ 2594/6, 2600.

Embling, Guyhirn

Acquired from Stagecoach East Midlands in Hull are Leyland Olympian/Alexander C648 LFT and Olympian/Northern Counties E901/18/25 KYR, new to Selkent's Bexleybus operation in London.

Ensignbus, Purfleet EB

Dennis Darts 620/92 (392 MBF, L120 HHV) have entered service, while DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 605/40 (G505 XBL, G740 RTY) are withdrawn.

Epsom Buses (Quality Line)

The first double-deckers for this operator, Alexander Dennis Enviro400s DD1-10 (SK07 DZA-H/J/L), are due

into service on routes 406 and 418 from 30 June. Dennis Darts SD13/4/8, 22/5 (\$459/60/4 LGN, V943 DNB, W873 VGT) have gone to Finnegan, Bray, Ireland.

Excel, Stansted

Leyland Olympian/ECW H42/26D C122 CHM, D129 FYM) and former Brighton & Hove Scania N113DRB/East Lancs H47/33F F212 LFG, G727/8 RYJ have been acquired.

Fairbrother, Warrington

Ex-Go North East DAF DB250/Optare Spectra H44/27F K313/21 FYG have been acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), to whom Leyland Olympians F455/9 BKF have been sold.

Fargo, Braintree

This operator does *not* have Leyland Olympians MUH 289X and F802 NGU, as reported in May Fleet News, but Fargo, Bracknell does.

First Berkshire FG

New Euro5 Mercedes-Benz Citaro/B38F 64030-9 (LK07 CCA/D-F/J/N/O/U/V/X) began to enter service on routes 75/76/77 (Maidenhead/Cippenham/Windsor-Slough-Heathrow) in late-May in a new 7 Series blue livery.

Volvo Olympian/Alexander RL-type 34275 (P175 TGD) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 46921 (N821 FLW) are withdrawn.

First Bristol FG

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 45469 (NDZ 3169), Dart/Plaxton Pointer 46619 (M519 DHU) and Leyland Lynxes 62619/21 (F619/21 RTC) have gone for scrap. Leyland Olympian/ECW 34817 (C417 HJN) has gone to First Devon & Cornwall

First Coaches FG

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 20454 (R944 PWS) has passed to First Hampshire & Dorset, Volvo B12T/Plaxton Excalibur 20201-3 (T701-3 JLD) to First London.

Below: The new Euro5-engined Mercedes-Benz Citaros for First Berkshire's 7 Series-branded routes to Heathrow include 64035 (LK07 CCN), photographed in Tamar Way, Langley. Their London registrations reflect joint management of this company with First's businesses in the UK capital. **MARK LYONS**



FLEET IN FOCUS

Fleet:	Express Coaches
Based:	Head Office and depot — Llyfni Road, Pen-y-groes, Gwynedd, sub-depot at Gwyrfa Garage, Bontnewydd, Gwynedd
Website:	www.expressmotors.co.uk
Founded:	The company dates back to 1908, and in 1910 a Caernarfon-Rhosgadfan service started, which later ran in parallel with Silver Star, who took over its stage services and some vehicles in 1970. Express Motors moved to Bontnewydd, taking the expanding coach work and did not recommence stage carriage operation, under new ownership, until 1982, when it took over two Gwynedd County Council-supported routes from Crosville, using a minibus on quieter journeys during the middle of the day. Bus service expansion came in 1986 with the capture of numerous county council contracts. Maldwyn Jones Coaches of Blaenau Ffestiniog was acquired in phases at the end of 1988 with seven buses and coaches, together with a depot at Blaenau, which lasted around 10 years.
Where does it operate?	12 country bus routes cover much of Gwynedd centred on Caernarfon. The Blaenau-Porthmadog-Caernarfon-Bangor route is the main commercial spine, but routes go as far south as Aberystwyth, north-east to Llandudno, and one of many schoolday services reaches Anglesey. A summer open-top service operates between Rhydd Ddu and Porthmadog.
Livery:	Buses are white with yellow skirt and roof, although some Optare Solos have silver instead of white. Coaches are white with beach holiday graphics. After deregulation in 1986, the fleet livery of red (with red Bws Gwynedd fronts) gave way to turquoise and white, before changing to the present colours.
How many vehicles?:	40 of which nine (eight MAN and one TransBus Dart) are single-deck buses, 14 (seven Mercedes-Benz, six Optare Solo and one Marshall Minibus) are midibuses, 14 (three Neoplan, two Van Hool integral, two Bova, two DAF, one MAN and four Mercedes) coaches and three double-deckers (one ex-Southdown open-top Bristol VR, one ex-West Riding Leyland Olympian and a VDL DB250/Optare Spectra supplied new). Two preserved vehicles owned are a 1950 Bedford OB and a 1969 Bristol RE.
Newest vehicles?:	Most buses and coaches are now purchased new. Two Marcopolo Viale-bodied MAN 18.220 buses (CX56 AHZ, AXD) arrived in September 2006 and February 2007, but Berkhof-bodied MAN 34-seat midicoach Y202 HGY was acquired from Redwing, London in March.
Most interesting vehicle:	The Marcopolo-bodied MANs and Marshall Minibus R405 XFL are rare and Optare Spectra EM05 ORS is the only example in Wales. Unusual buses operated in the past included Leyland Leopard EX1 1726 rebodied with a Willowbrook Warrior bus body, which came in 1991, and Leyland National Greenway EX1 2455, which saw further service with Blackburn Transport. Secondhand Bristol REs and VRs were acquired when bus services expanded in 1986. These gave way to Leyland Leopards and Nationals before new buses started to be bought.



Above: EX1 1726, the Willowbrook Warrior-rebodied Leyland Leopard, in the old turquoise and white livery. It was acquired from Road Car in 1991 and was built on a 1978 chassis. **ANDREW JAROSZ**



Above: CX56 AXD, the Marcopolo Viale-bodied MAN 18.220 supplied in February, in Maentwrog in March. **JOHN YOUNG**

First Cymru FG

Dennis Dart/Wright B26F 40556 (KDZ 5104) was transferred from First South Yorkshire for spares, but has instead entered service at Port Talbot re-registered Q220 FLH. Another Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon Expressliner C49Ft transferred in is 20512 (WX51 AJY), this time from First Devon & Cornwall. Also from Devon & Cornwall are Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall B31F 41158/64 (R158 TLM) and B35F 41177 (R177 TLM).

Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart demonstrator SN56 AYB has not been seen on service since late March. Seven of the forthcoming Enviro200s are destined for Swansea.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver 51230 (M230 VWU) has been withdrawn and Dennis Darts 46525/40/3 (L525/40/3 JEP) are in reserve. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 20432 (T869 RGA), Mercedes 709D 51230 (M230 VWU) and Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 90209 (C717 DDE, 2405 DD) have been sold.

First Devon & Cornwall FG

Optare Solo M850/B26F 53107-11 (EQ02 FLG/H/J/K/Z) are at Plymouth from First London. Leyland Olympian/ECW DPH42/30F 34817 (C417 HJN) is here from First Bristol, while further older double-deckers are Volvo Citybus/Alexander RV DPH47/35F 38002/9/10 (D702/9/10 GHY) from First Somerset & Avon.

The Dennis Trident/Plaxton Presidents refurbished for Mayflower Link service 93 (Plymouth-Dartmouth) and

repainted green/cream, 32802/8/12/46 (T802/8/12/46 LLC), have been rebuilt from H39/20D to H39/24F.

Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon Expressliner 20512 (WX51 AJY) and Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall 41158/64/77 (R158/64/77 TLM) have been transferred to First Cymru.

First Eastern Counties FG

Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 37156-60 (AU07 DXS/T/V-X) are to H45/29F layout.

Volvo B6s 48001/71/88 (L101 PWR, M871 DYS, M588 ANG) have gone for scrap, while tri-axle Volvo Olympian 30104 (K488 EUX), Dennis Darts 45338 (JDZ 2338), 46014 (J514 FPS) and 46380 (M380 YEX), B6s 48091/3 (M591/3 ANG) and Scania L113CRL/Wright Access-ultralow 65531 (R151 GSF) are withdrawn.

First Essex FG

Dennis Darts 46129/30/78 (M929/30 TEV, N978 EHJ) and Mercedes-Benz 711D 51807 (P407 HPU) have been withdrawn. 46130 suffered severe fire damage while in service at Walton-on-the-Naze in April. Dart 46122 (M922 TEV) is expected to re-enter service as spare vehicle at Dovercourt to replace the last manual gearbox Mercedes, 51780 (P680 HPU).

Mercedes Vario/Plaxton Cheetah 56001 (YN53 VBT) is reported with First Hampshire & Dorset.

Dart 46134 (M934 TEV), notable when delivered as the 1,000th Plaxton Pointer body on the 2,000th Dennis Dart chassis, was removed from Clacton by Erith Commercials

on 3 May, along with the Van Hool integral G841 PNW and former Telematics Mercedes 90241 (H351 LJN).

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

The new Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini is at Southampton, 37161-5 (HY07 FTA, FSV/Z/U/X), are H45/29F. Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetah C33F 56001 (YN53 VBT) and Mercedes 811D/Plaxton Beaver B23F 51805 (P405 HPU), still in Thamesway livery, have come from First Essex. 51805 was acquired for a contract, was found to be unsuitable and has been withdrawn without being used. Also transferred, from First Coaches, is Volvo B10M/Plaxton Expressliner 2 C49Ft 20454 (R944 PWS), while Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B22F 52553/5 (S553/5 RWP) have come, respectively, from First Somerset & Avon and First Wyvern.

Withdrawn are Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton Paramount 3200 20056 (RIL 1056), B10M-61/Duple Caribbean 20074 (TJ1 3134), B10M-61/karus Blue Danube 20078 (TJ1 3138), Leyland Olympian/ECW 34756 (A756 VAF), Dennis Dart/Wright Handybuses 45379/84/6/93/4 (JDZ 2379 etc), Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander 50121 (M158 LNC) and Iveco TurboDaily/Marshall 52089 (M189 XTR).

First Leicester FG

Transferred from First Manchester for driver training is the prototype Volvo B10M/Northern Counties Paladin, 60374 (J461 OVU), which appeared at Coach & Bus '91.



Above: Go North East 5275 (NK07 KPG), the first of nine air conditioned Mercedes-Benz Citaros for Red Arrows-branded limited stop services between Newcastle, Washington and Sunderland, entered service in May. **STEVEN HODGSON**

First London **FG**

Three-axle Volvo B12T/Plaxton Excalibur C51F VCT20201-3 (T701-3 JLD) have been received from First Coaches at Bristol. They were new for the Reading-Heathrow Railair service.

Optare Solos OOL53101-11 (EO02 FLA-H/J/K/Z) have, as expected, left the fleet, 53101-6 for First West Yorkshire, 53107-11 for First Devon & Cornwall.

First Manchester **FG**

Deliveries have started of this operator's first low-floor double-deckers, Volvo B9TL/Wright Eclipse Geminis that include 37279/81-8 (MX07 BPY, BRFN/Z, BSO/U/N/Y/Z) and leather-seated 37304 (MX07 BHV).

Also new are Greater Manchester PTE-owned Irisbus Scolabus/Vehixel 68215/6 (NX07 DAO/U), which are based at the Ince schoolbus unit.

Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F 69206 (06 D 67526) was re-registered MV06 DYU in April before entering service at Queens Road.

Volvo single-deckers transferred elsewhere for use as training vehicles are prototype B10M/Northern Counties Paladin 60374 (J461 OVU) to First Leicester, B10B/Alexander Strider 61363/4 (L304/5 VSU) to First York and B10B/Northern Counties 66651 (K114 PRV) and B10B/Plaxton Verde 66652 (M967 GDU) to First West Yorkshire. Volvo B10L/Wright Liberator 60354 (N562 BNF) has gone to First South Yorkshire for public service.

Other vehicles reported withdrawn by the PSV Circle are all-Leyland Olympian 30237 (J157 YRM), Volvo Citybus/Northern Counties 30343/5 (H704/6 GVM), Volvo B6/Northern Counties 40217 (M270 SVU), B6/Alexander Dash 40244 (N212 WBA), Dennis Dart/Northern Counties 40255/8 (N623/6 CDB), Dart/Plaxton Pointer 40284/92/8, 40301 (N652 CDB, M965 XVT, N604/8 XJM), fire-damaged Optare Excel 60153 (R3 LCB) and Volvo B10B/Wright Endurance 60316/40 (N521/45 VWR).

Scania N113DRB/East Lancs 30255-7 (H813-5 WKH) have been sold to North West Bus Sales, Bolton (dealer) for scrap, while Volvo Citybus/Alexander double-deckers 30370/3/80 (G301 OGE, G688 PNS, G524 RDS) have gone to Cancu, Malta (via Wealden PSV, Five Oak Green) for conversion to open-top sightseeing buses.

First Somerset & Avon **FG**

Volvo Citybus/Alexander RV 38002/9/10 (D702/9/10 GHY) have gone to First Devon & Cornwall while 38003/11/7 (D703/11 GHY, E217 BTA) are withdrawn, 38003/17 going for scrap.

Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 52553 (S553 RWP) has gone to First Hampshire & Dorset.

Also withdrawn are Dennis Darts 46002 (H802 GDV), 46195-8 (L205-8 GMO), 46205/11/4 (L205 SHW, L211/4 VHU), Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 51079-81/3/4/91/5, 51106, (L879-81/3/4/91/5, 906 VHT), 51538 (M838 ATC), 711D 51680 (P180 LYB) and Volvo B10M/Alexander P-type driver trainer 66504 (D104 GHY).

Mercedes 609D 51613 (N613 GAH), Volvo B10M/P-types 66501/12 (D101 GHY; TPR 534, D112 GHY) and Volvo B9M trainers 90185/6 (C256 CFG, C158 TLF) have been sold to Munden, Bristol (dealer).

Dennis Lancs 67129, 67222 (L129 TFB, L322 AAB) have become trainers.

First South Yorkshire **FG**

Twenty Volvo B9TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers

Right: First has removed the front wheel spats – which were meant to make them look less like buses and more like trams – from its Wright StreetCars on 'ftr' routes in York and Leeds, as seen on 19029 (YK06 EKT) in York. **DANIEL STAZICKER**

were launched on 23 May for service X78 (Sheffield-Meadowhall-Rotherham-Doncaster) and began to enter service from 1 June. Those noted so far are 37246-8/50/1/3-5/7-60/2-4 (YN07 MKD-F/J/K/M/O/P/X/Z, MLE/F/K/L/O).

Volvo B10L/Wright Liberator 60354 (N562 BNF) was transferred from First Manchester in May.

More ex-London Volvo Olympians rebuilt from H47/27D to H47/31F are 34095/8, 34211/39 (T895/8 KLF, S211 LLO, P239 HMD).

The last Mercedes-Benz Vario, 50192 (R125 XDT), reported as reinstated in March Fleet News, was used only for route learning. The only minibuses remaining in service are ex-Yorkshire Rider Mercedes 709Ds 50209/11/3 (N278/81/2 JUG).

Dennis Dart/Plaxton 40511 (L970 NET) has been withdrawn while Dart/Wright Handybus 40556 (KDZ 5104) has passed to First Cymru.

First West Yorkshire **FG**

More Volvo B7LA/Wright StreetCar AB37D are 19023/4 (YJ07 LVR/S), 19012-22 (YJ06 XLR/S, YJ56 EAA/C/E-G, LJ07 LVL-O) were all in service by mid-April, 19023/4 in May. Front wheel spats have been removed from all StreetCars in service in Leeds and York, apparently following two incidents in which they fell off in service.

The third new Metro-owned Optare Solo M950/B26F for the Leeds Free City Bus route is 53909 (YJ07 EHR), while ex-First London Solo M850/B26F 53101-6 (EO02 FLA-F) are at Leeds.

Volvo B10B/Northern Counties Paladin 66651 (K114 PRV) and B10B/Plaxton Verde 66652 (M967 GDU) have come from First Manchester as training vehicles.

Scania N113DRB/Alexander RH-types 36921/3/7-9 (F421/3/7-9 GWG), N113CRB/Alexander Strider 61102 (K624 HUG) and Mercedes-Benz 709D 50182 (N511 DWE) have been sold for scrap.

First Wyvern **FG**

Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 52555 (S555 RWP) has gone to First Hampshire & Dorset.

First York **FG**

Former Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider 61363/4 (L304/5 VSU) are here as driver trainers from First Manchester.

Fishwick, Leyland

Mercedes-Benz Citaro demonstrator BX56 VTP has been used in service. New coaches delivered in March were VDL SB4000XS/Van Hool Alizée C42F YJ07 JWF/G.



Florida, Halstead

Acquired is MAN 8.136/Reeve Burgess C122 BTP (WJV 980).

Fourway, Leeds

New are Irisbus EuroRider/Plaxton Panther C57F YN07 DUA and Mercedes-Benz Vario 0816D/Plaxton Centenary Cheetah C33F YN07 DVK/L.

GHA Coaches, Corwen

New are Volvo B12B/Jonckheere Mistral 50 C49F GA07 GHA and Mercedes-Benz Vario 0814D/Plaxton Cheetah C33F AA07 GHA.

Volvo B10B/Alexander ALX300 T510 APS and Volvo Olympian/East Lancs Pyoneer R371 DJN have been acquired ex-UK North, Manchester, while Dennis Javelin/Duple 320 coaches F721 KCA and 708 WPG (G144 RCA) have come from Evans, Pentre Llanrhaeadr.

Glover, Ashbourne

Leyland Tigers acquired are TRCT11/3R/Plaxton Paramount C53F GIL 1609 (A834 PPP), ex-Boydén, Winkhill, and TRCL10/3ARZ/Duple C57F G794 RNC ex-Munro, Jedburgh. Volvo B10M/Plaxton coaches acquired are F869 RFP (C53F) ex-Hollinshead, Biddulph and L776 LUJ (C49F) ex-Munro, Jedburgh.

Leyland Tiger/Duple YNN 396Y and Leyland Swift/Reeve Burgess MIB 3957 are withdrawn.

Go North East **GA**

The first Mercedes-Benz Citaro, B40F-seated 5275 (NK07 KPG) in Red Arrows livery, entered service at Washington on 25 May.

White-painted Volvo B7LA/Wright StreetCar AB57D YN07 SYJ destined for First began a two-week trial on CentreLink route X66 (Gateshead-MetroCentre) on 31 May alongside the articulated Scania on this route. Passengers were sold tickets before boarding the bus.

Commercial manager Andrew Tyldsley kindly confirms the branding on the new Scania OmniCity single-deckers as follows: 5234-42 are red with The Red Kite branding for services 45/46/A; 5243-50 are red with West Durham Swift branding for X30/X31/X70; 5251-3 are red with Go North East fleetnames for use mainly on service 15; 5254-8 are in blue/silver with Cobalt Clipper branding for service 309;

...continued overleaf

GROUP CODES
AA Arriva Passenger Services
DG Comfort Delgro
EB Ensignbus
EY EYMS Group
FG FirstGroup
GA Go-Ahead Group
NX National Express Group
RO Rotale
ST Stagecoach Group
TD Transdev
TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
VE Veolia
WG Wellglade Group

5259-61 are spares in all-over white; 5262-74 are in pink, with branding to be added from late-July. Pink 5262-70 were allocated temporarily to Washington for Red Arrows services X1/X2, pending delivery of Mercedes Citaros, but will join 5271-4 on service 21 at Chester-le-Street; 5234-53/9 are at Stanley, 5254-8 at Percy Main and 5260/1 at Chester-le-Street.

Optare Versa YJ56 ATF has been inspected but not used in service, while further demonstrators have been Optare Tempo YJ07 EGD, numbered 9172, and Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban BX07 AZJ, numbered 9173.

Dennis Dart/Marshall C37 8120 (N120 WBR) has been sold. Ensignbus, Purfleet (dealer) has sold DAF DB250/Optare Spectras 3845/53 (K313/21 FYG) to Fairbrother, Warrington.

Go West Midlands GA

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur coaches R287/9 DWL (R9, 10 OXF) were acquired from Oxford Bus Company for short-term use on National Express work until the contract passes to Veolia. Ex-Go North East Volvo B10B/Plaxton Verde B52F N813-6 WGR are numbered 621-4.

One hundred buses had been repainted in the new livery by late-April. In May, two buses — one is Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 461 (KU52 RXW) — were painted voluntarily in an advertising livery for Network West Midlands, the branding being used by Centro (the West Midlands PTE) to promote public transport across the conurbation.

The PSV Circle reports that Dennis Dart SLFs 420/1/35 (R659/60 GCA, V385 JWK) are resealed to B41F (ex-B40F, B39F and B34F respectively), 431/2 (T442/3 EBD) to B40F (ex-B33F), 437 (V377 SVV) to B39F (ex-B37F) and 504/5 (V266/7 BNV) to B28F (ex-B29F).

Withdrawals confirmed are of Dennis Lance/Northern Counties Paladin 302/10/1 (K302/10/1 YJA) and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 725/7 (J701/5 EMX).

Harrogate Coach Travel, Green Hammerton

Another ex-Beeston, Hadleigh (new to Bullock, Cheadle) Scania L113CRL/Wright Access-ultralow B47F here (in fleet livery) is EIG 1356 (N631 XBU). Similar N634 XBU is re-registered 5147 UA.

Hill, Wolverhampton

BX07 NKM is a new 9.3m Mercedes-Benz Tourino/C36F midicoach for this family-owned business.

Hilton, Newton-le-Willows

Volvo Citybus/Alexander F136 PHM, latterly with MK Metro, and Volvo B10M/Van Hool R147 OYS passed rapidly through this fleet, though Volvo B10M/Plaxton TIL 8795 has remained. Leyland Olympians B153 NKB and F506 OYW have been sold.

Holmeswood Coaches, Lancs

Iveco EuroRider 391E.12.35/Beulas C53F T289/90/3 CGU were acquired from McColl, Dunoon in February.

Hornsby, Ashby, Scunthorpe

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer R189 NFE has been sold to Thamesdown Transport.

Hulme Hall, Cheadle Hulme

Dennis Javelin/Plaxton F952 ENH was re-registered OTK 802 in May.

Ipswich Buses

Two demonstrators have been on loan, Scania N230UB/East Lancs Esteem 501 (YN06 TGE), and MAN 18.240/East Lancs Kinetic CU56 AVP; 501 covered for remedial work on OmniCity single-deckers and was replaced by an OmniCity demonstrator, YN56 YZV, also numbered 501. Two other demonstrators have been Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban 502 (BX07 AZJ) and Alexander Dennis Enviro300 503 (SK07 DYA), which was on park-&-ride duties.

Optare Solo 245 (YJ05 XNY) has a new hybrid pack and is back in service on the free shuttle.

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 180 (H180 HPV) is with Jones, Llanfaethlu.

J&D Eurotravel, Harrow

New is Mercedes-Benz 1018/Unvi Esker Cimo YN07 EDK. Mercedes Vario/Plaxton Cheetham YN03 WXY, was on loan until the Cimo arrived.

JSB, Coundon, Co Durham

Another newcomer is plain white Optare Solo MX07 JPV.



Above: Go West Midlands 461 (KU52 RXW), a Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLF, in the Network West Midlands advertising livery promoting public transport for Centro, the PTE. **BEN MORROLL**

Jones, Llanfaethlu

Ex-Ipswich Buses DAF SB220/Optare Delta B44D H180 HPV is at work on Holyhead dockside.

KB Coaches, Stonehouse, Glos

A new Mercedes-Benz O815/Unvi Esker Riada C33F is YN07 ECT.

Kent Top Travel, Aylesford

Additions are VDL SB120/Wright Cadet B39F YJ06 LEU, which had been on loan from Kent County Council, Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B39F W378, 566 JVV and B37F KN52 NFM, ex-Menzies, Heathrow; Aston, Worcester; and Clynog & Trevor, Trefor respectively, B27F Optare Solo YF02 SKN and 15-seat Renault Master GK02 WCY.

Kimes, Folkingham, Lincs

Acquired via Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) is former UK North, Manchester DAF SB220/Ikarus B44F W178 CDN.

Konectbus, Dereham

Optare Excel 2 L1180/B45F W216-9 PRB were expected from Trent Barton in May, to replace ex-Trent Barton DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 301/9/40 (J201, 309 BVO, K640 FAU) and accident damaged 353 (K353 FAL), which has been stripped for spares and was due to go to Wigley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

LA Coaches, Sale

All-over white Plaxton Primo MX07 LBG is in use mainly on service 281 (Altrincham-Timperley Circular).

Lakeside Coaches, Ellesmere, Shropshire

A recent addition is Volvo B12M/Plaxton YN56 ORZ.

Lloyd, Machynlleth

New is Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Cheetham C29F LC07 WYN. Mercedes 709D/Alexander N202 LFFV has gone to Coach Travel Wales, Porterswyd.

London Central/London General GA

Thirty-two Alexander Dennis Enviro400s have been ordered for route 24 (Hampstead Heath-Pimlico), which has been won from Metroline.

Dennis Dart LDP35 (P735 RYL) has been converted into a mobile medical centre, which will visit the company's garages.

Gas-powered DAF SB220/East Lancs Millennium MD8-10 (V8-10 GMT) have been disposed of, as has accident-damaged Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini WV150 (LX53 BJO).

Following conversion of PDL10 (X701 EGK), plans to convert some early Dennis Tridents into driver trainers have been changed to similar conversion of Volvo B7TLs instead, starting with Plaxton President-bodied PVL140 (W404 WGH).

Longmynd Travel, Shrewsbury

New is Bova Futura FHD YJ07 DVO.

Low Fell, Gateshead

This operator ceased providing Nexus tendered routes at short notice from 27 May. Arriva took over evening/Sunday

service 10C (Clara Vale-MetroCentre), Go North East early morning/late evening 164/165 (Gateshead-Dunston Circular), Kingsley Coaches the Monday to Saturday 184 (Washington-Birtley-Portmeads) and Stanley Taxis the weekday 331 (Four Lane Ends Metro-Balliol Business Park).

MacPherson, Donisthorpe, Leics

This operator's first new Optare Solo is M780SE/B27F MX07 JPJ.

Marshall, Sutton-on-Trent

MCW Metrobus MkII H43/30F POG 583Y has been acquired from Stagecoach Lincolnshire.

MASS, North Anston

Leyland Titans seem to be back in vogue; former Greater Manchester Park Royal H47/26F-bodied GNF 6V has been acquired out of preservation (it wore its later Swindon & District guise), and ex-Reading RMO 77Y, with Leyland DPH39/27F bodywork, has been acquired from Trustline, Harlow.

Former Kowloon Motor Bus, Hong Kong, Dennis Dragon/Duple Metsec E537 AKU, understood to be ex-KMB 3SN186 (DW 8351) entered service in April.

MCH, Uxbridge

New is Mercedes Sprinter/Esker Riada 616 C22F YN07 NUX.

McCarthy, Macclesfield

New is Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon C57F YN56 NHK.

McLean, Witney

BX56 VTG is one of two new 13m Setra ComfortClass S416GT-HD/C53F tri-axle coaches for this 25-strong Oxfordshire fleet.

Metrobus, Orpington GA

The five MAN 12.240/East Lancs Esteem B27D for route R2 are 701-5 (PN07 KKK/O/U/V/X). They replace former Tellings-Golden Miller Dart SLFs 220-3 (KX04 HRD-G), which are being repainted white and returned to Dawsonrentals.

Two Euro4 Scania CN230UB OmniCity/B36D at Crawley, for an increase in frequency on Fastway route 10, are 559/60 (YN07 LKF/G). Six Euro4 Scania OmniDekka/East Lancs are due for route 405, to enable six 2006 OmniDekkas to transfer from Crawley to Orpington to replace the last Dennis Tridents, 418/22/5-8 (LV51 YCD/H/L-O), though two will be kept for regained Crawley routes 409/411 until the two new Scania N230UD/East Lancs Olympus arrive in August/September.

AEC Routemaster RML2317 will operate route 291 on 14 July and 1 September, on the 06.58, 10.50 and 14.50 journeys from Crawley and the 08.35, 12.35 and 17.05 journeys from Tunbridge Wells.

Metroline DG

Delivery of TE733/5-8 (LK07 AZN/P/R/T/U) to Edgware in April completes the latest batch of 15 Alexander Dennis Enviro400/H41/26D. A further 20 are on order for route 332 and 18 more MAN 12.240/MCV Evolution single-deckers are due for the new 90 contract.

Volvo Olympian AV34 (S134 RLE) has become a training vehicle for the new iBus location system, while

ex-Thorpes Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer DLF106-8 (KU52 YLB-D) are driver trainers.

Withdrawn are Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall DML9-11/3/5/7 (R689 NEW etc), while Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President VPL233/6 (Y233/6 NLK) are in store.

Ex-London Suburban Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II V201/4/16/7 (L201/4 SKD, L216/7 VWM) have been sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Mott, Aylesbury.

DD03 BUZ, the first 13.8m long Neoplan Skyliner for the UK, has been acquired from Buzzlines, Lympepe.

Mullany, Watford

AEC Routemaster RML2743 (SMK 743F) has been sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet.

NCB Motors, Wem, Shropshire

Recent arrivals from Holmeswood Coaches are Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premier 350 C57F N287 OYE and B10M/Jonckheere C57F N78 CVP. Both have been re-registered with NCB numbers, that on N78 CVP being C19 NCB.

Nottingham City Transport

The 13.7m tri-axle Scania OmniLink K270UB/B55F for the Link 1 park-&-ride service are 301-3 (YN07 LDX-Z) with Scania's five-cylinder 9litre Euro4 engine.

The PSV Circle reports withdrawal of Volvo Olympian/East Lancs Pyoneer double-deckers 458/9/61/6 (S458/9/61 ATV, R466 RRA), while Optare Aleros 907-9 (YN04 XZV, YN54 LLC/D) passed to Nottingham Community Transport in March.

Notts & Derby WG

Volvo B10B-58/Northern Counties Paladin B49F 129 (M129 PRA) has been transferred from Trent Barton, while ex-Arriva Volvo Citybus/Marshall double-decker 738 (B138 GAU) is withdrawn and Dennis Lance/Optare Sigma 364/5 (N364/5 VRC) have gone to Travel Master, Stretford via Go-Goodwins, Eccles.

Nova Tours, Chesterfield.

New is Bova Futura YJ07 DWC.

Ogden, St Helens

Dennis Dart SLF/UVG UrbanStar R554 UOT and Dart SLF/Marshall R402/3/7 XFL have gone to A1, Stretton, along with some of the services.

Oxford Bus Company GA

Following the delivery of new Volvo B12Bs 81-90, Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur 8, 11, 14-7 (R8, 11 OXF, V14-7 OXF) were re-registered R401/2 DWL, V283/2/4/1 SBW respectively. 8 and 11 have passed to Wilts & Dorset, along with similar 69, 70 (R810/09 NUD; R5, 6 OXF), 9 and 12 (R287/9 DWL; R9, 10 OXF), also B10M/Excaliburs, have passed to Go West Midlands, while 17 has been retained as a training vehicle to suit new driving test regulations, renumbered 961.

A further consequence is that the Volvo B12B/Jonckheere Mistrals, 51-6 (OA-OF02 OXF), have been repainted from Airlink livery to Espresso and renumbered 29-34.

Also withdrawn is Volvo B10M/Excalibur 71 (R808 NUD, R7 OXF) and Volvo B10B/Plaxton Verde 619 (N619 FJO), which has been written off.

Powell, Hellaby, S Yorks

Acquired are Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H43/30F E906/7/10/4/7 KYR.

Procter, Leeming Bar, N Yorks

A new Optare Solo for the Dales & District bus fleet is MX07 JOU.

Raddoneur, Birkenhead

Two Plaxton Primo/B28F midibuses placed in service in May are MX07 BCZ, NTN; BCZ was previously with City Clipper, Southampton and wore its yellow livery on its sides for its first few days in service before being repainted white like NTN.

Reading Transport

MAN-engined B33F Optare Solo YJ07 EGC has been on trial at Newbury mainly on route 102 to Reading, while Reading hosted Alexander Dennis Enviro400 Euro4 demonstrator SN56 AWW, following a period of demonstration to Thames Travel, Wallingford, but it was not used in service here.



Above: The first three 13.7m tri-axle Scania OmniLinks for the UK, including 303 (YN07 LDZ) seen on driver training, have joined Nottingham City Transport's park-&-ride fleet. Stagecoach Fife has ordered nine similar vehicles with coach seating. PERRY JEST

Goldline DAF/Van Hool coaches 235/9 (J788 KHD, R37 GNW) have gone to Caroline Seagull, Great Yarmouth. DAF DB250/Optare Spectra 705 (L705 FRD) has passed to Ensign (dealer). The cannibalised remains of gas-powered Optare MetroRider 614 (M614 NRD) are due to be collected by Sykes (dealer), Barnsley.

Further to last month's report, the 21 Scania N230UD/East Lancs Olympus double-deckers due in November will be 841-61. Also SN04 CPE, the yellow Scania/East Lancs convertible open top double-decker that received attention at Reading during April, has been advertised by a dealer.

Reay, Wigton, Cumbria

New in April were Volvo B12B/Jonckheere C51Ft PX07 GXS-V and Scania K114EB4/Irizar C51Ft YN07 EXR/S.

Secondhand Volvo B10M-62s acquired in March were Van Hool C46Ft-bodied MDM 371 (P806 GBA, L888 LMT, P806 GBA) from Hunter, Sauchie and Jonckheere C53F-bodied Y92 CDS (Y7 DCC, Y92 CDS, LSK 873) from Durham City Coaches, but new to Park, Hamilton. Bova Futuras W416 RHH (C1 UFC) and YK04 FVZ (712 GRM) were sold then to Hunter and Durham City respectively.

Also sold are Futuras P510 NWU, R956 JGE, T49 OGB, FN04 CZZ and YK04 FVV (YSV 695), while other Futuras re-registered are 487 FHW to M908 XWA and 472 HKE to M230 XWG.

Volvo B12/Jonckheere B8 CWR and P24 TTX have been re-registered TKU 717 and B8 CWR respectively.

Redby, Sunderland

New is all-white Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban MX07 OYT. BMC Falcon BX55 NYG, previously on loan to Johnson, Henley-in-Arden, has been in use on South Tyneside College service 501.

Below: The second Rossendale Volvo Olympian repainted in a historic livery to commemorate the centenary of one of its constituent municipalities is Northern Counties Palatine-bodied 24 (S864 DGX), which wears Rawtenstall Corporation maroon. JOHN CRONSHAW



Red Kite, St Helens

Volvo Citybus G153 TYT has been sold.

Red Rose, Aylesbury

New Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts reported in service in white in Watford are OV07 FKJ/J.

Red Route Buses, Northfleet

Ex-East London commercial fleet Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400 H51/22D T648 KPU has been acquired from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Redwing, London

This year's new coaches include Setra S415GT-HD 281 (BX07 NKG) in Evan Evans Tours livery.

RH Transport, Witney

New for this Oxfordshire operator is Optare Solo MX07 JNU in blue/cream livery.

RML Travel, Burslem, Staffs

Two more notable purchases of this operator, which now operates two local bus routes in the Potteries towns, are Leyland National 10351A/2R/B44F BYW 366V (originally London Transport LS366) from Arriva Midlands' auction of ex-Chase Bus Services vehicles on 19 May and M880 ATC, a Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer B35F, from Stagecoach Lincolnshire; the B6 entered service in Road Car green/white/yellow livery.

Roselyn, Par, Cornwall

New here is three-axle Van Hool Acron coach NM07 EDE.

Rossendale Transport

The second bus painted in a centenary livery, Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 24 (S864 DGX) has emerged in Rawtenstall Corporation maroon and cream, in plenty of time for a centenary rally and open day on Saturday 28 July.

Sanders, Holt

New Optare Solos MX07 NTL/M, based at North Walsham, have replaced the Plaxton Primos operated here. Also new are Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Cheetah coaches YN07 DTY, DVF.

Snaith, Otterburn

A second Volvo B12M/Plaxton coach is YN07 KHJ.

Silcox, Pembroke Dock

New are 20/2 (MX07 BLE, BAO), Optare Solo/B33F, and 197 (YX07 AWW), the Mercedes-Benz 1323L/Solera HD C37F shown at Coach & Bus Live in November, which replaces previous 197 (FY02 YHF), a Mercedes Sprinter/Optare Soroco.

Used acquisitions are 12 (S862 BHR), a Mercedes Sprinter/Mellor B17F, and 181 (WA53 WSY), a Volvo B12M/Berkhof Axial 50 C53F, which replaces the previous 181 (R530 HDE), a Volvo B10M/Caetano Algarve.

Mercedes 711D 10 (L865 LFS), 709D 20 (L632 XBX) and Leyland Tiger/Marshall 235 (A649 YOX) have been withdrawn and Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer Vanguard IIs 230/1 (K721/2 UDE) have been sold.

Solent Blue Line GA

Volvo B7TL/East Lancs Mylennium Vyking CO49/29F 908/9 (HF05 GGO/P) have been transferred back from Wilts & Dorset to operate the New Forest Tour, again with bicycle trailers. However, they have been repainted in a new green-based version of the blue/orange open-top livery applied to sister company Southern Vectis's open-toppers this year.

Following a period on loan to Wilts & Dorset, Leyland Olympians 709/22 (F709 SDL, G722 WDL) have been sold to a dealer.

Solus Coaches, Tamworth

Further to last month's report, there are two Temsa Safari HD/C51Ft here, YJ07 JHH, JUJ.

Somerbus, Paulton, Bristol

Former British Airways Van Hool A308 side-engined low-floor midibus J248 LLK was shown, newly repainted, at the Bristol Harbourside rally and running day in May.

Southern Vectis GA

The Mercedes-Benz Citaros are to be numbered 451-7 (HW07 CXR-VXXY).

South Lancs Travel, Atherton

Optare Solo/B32F 16-8 (K16-8 SLT) have MAN Euro4 engines and are for Wigan Easylink services.

The last two Mercedes-Benz OH1416/Wright Urbanrangers, 130/1 (L610 OWB, N31 EVT) have been sold, to Belle Vue Coaches. Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 8 (M88 SLT) has also been withdrawn. Ex-Trent Mercedes-Benz 709D/Marshall 81/2 (L811/2 CJF) have been sold to Centrebus, Leicester.

South Yorkshire Motors, Pontefract

The ex-Lothian/Rossendale Leyland Lynxes are 210-4 (H179/81/2/4/5 OSG). Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 204/6/8 (L405 JBD, L246 CCK, M462 VHE) have gone to PVS, Carlton (dealer).



Above: The new Best Impressions-designed New Forest Tour livery on Solent Blue Line 908 (HF05 GGO), one of the convertible open-top East Lancs Mylennium Vyking-bodied Volvo B7TLs and bicycle trailers transferred from Wilts & Dorset. MARK LYONS

Speedwell, Hyde

Acquired are Mercedes-Benz Vario O810D/Plaxton Beaver 2 R501 YWC, ex-Stagecoach Manchester, now in a green and white livery, and Vario O814D/Alexander ALX100 T156 AUA, ex-MacPherson, Donisthorpe.

Stagecoach Devon ST

Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart demonstrator SN56 AYA was on loan to Torquay depot in early May. Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprint 40513 (N513 BJA) has been withdrawn.

Stagecoach East ST

The first Bedford-allocated Volvo B10M/Plaxton Interurban converted to C70F and repainted yellow for a new School Bus unit is 52373 (P173 KBD), with 52124/55/6/60 (K154 DNV, L155/6/60 JNH) to follow.

Three more Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties are due to transfer from Bedford to Stagecoach Warwickshire for conversion to open top. These are likely to be 16534/7/55 (P534/7/26 EFL), leaving just 16538 (P538 EFL) of this batch remaining with Stagecoach in closed-top version.

Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile 53272 (KX56 JZK) has had its Virgin Trains (Milton Keynes-Luton Airport) branding reapplied and has returned to Bedford from Northampton.

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere trainer 52108 (ACZ 7490, J740 CWT) has gone to Travelmasters, Sheerness via Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), while B10M/Berkhof 52032 (N46 MJO) has moved to Stagecoach East Midlands for continued use as a driver trainer.

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

New stock-built Alexander Dennis buses for Worksop, part-funded by Nottinghamshire County Council for new services X29/30 (Retford/Worksop-Robin Hood Airport), are red/white/green Robin Hood Airport Lynx-branded Enviro400 double-deckers 19131/2 (FJ07 OSY/Z) and Enviro200 Darts 36001-4 (FJ07 OSU-X). Note that London fleetnumbers have been re-used.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton 32111 (K211 SRH) has transferred to Worksop from Stagecoach Lincolnshire at Grimsby, while Volvo B10M-62/Berkhof Excellence C51Ft driver trainer 52032 (N46 MJO) has come to Worksop from Stagecoach East.

Leyland Olympian/Alexander 14184/6 (G184/6 JHG), 14344/5 (H344/5 SWA), 14359-63 (K359-63 DWJ), 14632 (C632 LFT) have been transferred from Hull to Stagecoach Lincolnshire. Only two Leylands remain at Hull (14362/3).

Volvo B10M/Jonckheere 52655/6 (V905/6 DPN) have gone to Stagecoach East Scotland.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40800 (P350 NKH) is in reserve. Leyland Olympians sold to Wealden PSV (dealer) are 14613/4/7/34/43/8/61 (C613 LFT etc), 14901/8/9/12/8/22/5 (E901 KYR etc), of which 14648, 14901/18/25 have passed to Embling, Guyhirn.

Stagecoach Lincolnshire ST

New Optare Solo M850/B27F 47462/3 are at Lincoln and Newark respectively; no registration details were available as we closed for press.

Further Leyland Olympian/Alexander RLs transferred from Stagecoach East Midlands to replace MCW Metrobuses are DPH51/31F 14184/6 (G184/6 JHG), 14344/5 (H345 SWA) and DPH43/27F 14359-63 (K359-63 DWJ). Grimsby-based Dennis Dart/Plaxton 32111 (K211 SRH) has transferred to East Midlands.

Leyland Olympian/Alexander RH-type H45/31F 14632 (C632 LFT) was also transferred from Stagecoach East Midlands, but has since been withdrawn along with 14634 (C634 LFT), Metrobuses 15931/6/43/6/50/4/62/6/81 (NOA 436/42/61/71X, POG 486Y, POG 490, 515/20/82Y), Leyland Tiger/East Lancs rebody 25808 (DAZ 5455, RCY 121A, MKH 48A, SWN 820Y) and DAF SB220/Optare Delta 26036/54/5/61 (G600 NRC, G910 XFC, K344/6 FAL, K633 FAU).

Volvo B6/East Lancs EL2000 30153-6 (N322-5 JTL) have gone to McKindless, Wishaw via Ensign, Purfleet (dealer), which has sold Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde 27301 (M201 DRG) to ACL Travel, Hewish, Somerset and Lance/East Lancs 27701-4/6-9 (K701-4 NDO, L706-9 HFU) to A2Z Travel, Walsall. Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer 30980 (M880 ATC) is with RML Travel, Burslem.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

Fire-damaged Alexander Dennis Trident 18373 (MX55 KPZ) is to be scrapped; the damage was so extensive that rebodys was not an option.

Bova Futura driver trainer 59621 (NHE 340) has reverted to original registration N401 LTL, its cherished registration having returned to Stagecoach Yorkshire.

Placed in reserve are Leyland Olympians 13282/3/9/95/8 (F282 DRJ etc), tri-axle Olympian/Alexander 13519 (C49 HNF) and 13300/1 (F300/1 DRJ), latterly in the Magic Bus fleet, which were the last ex-GM Buses Olympians in passenger service; they are being used temporarily as driver trainers.

Left: J248 LLK, the low-floor ex-British Airways Van Hool A308 midibus newly acquired by Somerbus, arriving at the Bristol Harbourside Rally on 20 May. Its Cummins B-series engine is mounted directly behind the nearside front wheel. RICHARD FIELD



Also in reserve are Mercedes-Benz Varios 42004-6 (R504-6 YWC), 42569 (R446 YNF). Only 16 minibuses remain operational, three Mercedes 709Ds at Glossop (40429/33/4) and 13 Varios at Charles Street (ex-London 42007-9/15-8, 'native' 42537/46/51/2/6 and ex-Glossopdale 42573). The oldest operational Magic Bus vehicles are three-axle Olympian MegaDekkas 14239/40 (F201/2 UHH).

Sold are Leyland Olympians 13516/9 (C156 HBA, C49 HNF), Alexander-bodied 14603/54 (C603/54 LFT), ex-trainer Olympian/Northern Counties 13291 (F291 DRJ), tri-axle Olympian/Alexander 13511 (C167 HBA), Dennis Dominator/Northern Counties 15038 (H138 GVM) and Mercedes Varios 42001/11-4 (R501 YWC etc), 42570 (R447 YNF); 42001 (R501 YWC) passed to Speedwell, Hyde.

Stagecoach Merseyside ST

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander B25F 40645 (N645 VSS) has been transferred from Stagecoach North West.

Stagecoach North East ST

The latest Euro4 Alexander Dennis Enviro400 double-deckers are 19141-63 (NK07 HBE, GZV/WX/Y, HBF/G/H/J, GZZ, HBL/N, HAA/E/O/U/X, HBA-D/O/P). The original Euro3-engined Enviro400s are being cascaded elsewhere; 19023-6 (SN56 AVM/O/P/R) have moved to Stagecoach South East.

The Darlington operations are to be sold to Arriva North East (see News this month). At the time of the announcement in May, the depot allocation comprised 28 step-entrance Dennis Darts to cover a peak requirement of 24.

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 14673/4 (H673/4 BNL) have been converted to open-top and repainted for the City Sightseeing operation.

Volvo B10M/Northern Counties 20246/72 (M546 SPY, M712 KRH) have moved from Busways at Newcastle to Transit at Stockton while Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 16437 (685 DYE, N337 HGK) has moved from Stockton to Stagecoach Yorkshire.

Stagecoach North West ST

New Optare Solos will go in to service at Preston from 24 June when operation of two city services starts in direct competition with Preston Bus (see News this month).

Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall Capital 33163/70-3 (T601/8-11 JBA) have entered service at Preston (33163/71/2) and Kendal (33170/3), having been stored for a while in most cases, although 33173 came direct from Stagecoach Merseyside.

Volvo B6s have replaced Mercedes-Benz 709Ds on summer service 517 over the Kirkstone Pass.

Preston's Megabus allocation now comprises Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panthers 54023-6 (PX07 EAA/C/E/F), Neoplan Skyliner 50138 (LX05 BWN) having moved to Stagecoach Warwickshire and Leyland Olympian/Alexander tri-axes 13633/6 (G127/8 WGX) having gone into reserve, along with Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 13297 (F297 DRJ), Volvo B10M-55/Alexander 20175 (K575 LTS), Volvo B6/Alexander 30461 (M461 VHE) and 30846 (M846 HDF), Mercedes-Benz 814D/Alexander 42091 (S191 RAO) and Mercedes Vario 42545 (P545 PNE).

Reinstated are Leyland Titan 10334 (KYV 334X) at Morecambe and Volvo B6/Alexander 30309 (M749 PRS)

and 30456 (M456 VHE) at Preston, while Volvo Olympian/Alexander 16331/2/4/5 (N331 NPN etc) are being refurbished.

Volvo Olympian/Alexander 16359 (N359 MPN), 16641 (P271 VPN) and 16646/56/8 (R246/56/8 NBV) have gone to Stagecoach Fife, Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40645 (N645 VSS) to Stagecoach Merseyside and stored AEC Routemaster 12657 (NML 657E) to Stagecoach West.

Volvo B6/Alexander 30668 (L668 MSF) and Volvo B10M/Van Hool 52001 (OIW 5804, LYS 513Y, WCN 543Y) have been sold, while Leyland Titan 10340 (KYV 340X), Volvo B6 30724 (M74 HHB) and Mercedes 709Ds 40616, 40882 (N616 VSS, L882 SDY) have gone for scrap and stored Routemaster 12624 (NML 624E) has gone to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Awaiting disposal are Titan 10884 (A884 SUL), B6/Alexander 30275 (L275 JAO), Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 40398/9 (N198/9 LFF) and Iveco Daily 46603 (R603 KDD).

Stagecoach Oxford ST

Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton Interurban C51F 52251 (M951 TSX) was transferred from Stagecoach Fife in April for use as a driver trainer.

Stagecoach South East ST

Alexander Dennis Enviro400/H47/33F 19023-6

(SN56 AVM/O/P/R) are the first of eight to arrive at East Kent from Stagecoach North East.

Preserved Dennis Dart 32501 (J501 GCD), still based at Worthing, has lost its traditional Southdown green and cream livery for Stagecoach's pre-2000 striped livery, which it wore when new in 1992. Its seats have been recovered in original grey/red moquette with orange zigzags.

Leyland Titan 10348 (KYV 348X) has been reinstated at Herne Bay, Volvo B10M-55s 20634/49 (L634 TDY, R649 HCD) at Hastings, Dennis Darts 32537/46/85 (J537/46 GCD, K585 ODY) at Aldershot (32537) and Ashford (32546/85), Mercedes-Benz 709D 40969 (N969 NAP) at Andover and Mercedes Vario 42382 (S382 DFC) at Dover.

Withdrawn for disposal are Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash 32552 (J552 GCD) and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprint 40731 (N731 RDD) and 40957 (N957 NAP), while 709Ds 40728 (N728 RDD) and 40901 (N201 LPN) have been sold to Erith Commercials, Dartford (dealer).

Stagecoach Wales ST

Volvo B10M-55/Northern Counties Paladins 20869/86/92 (P869/86/92 MNE) have gone to Stagecoach West.

Stagecoach Warwickshire ST

Three more Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties — probably 16534/7/55 (P534/7/26 EFL) — are expected from Stagecoach East for conversion to open top for the Stratford-upon-Avon City Sightseeing operation. Neoplan Skyliner/CH65/24Dt 50138 (LX05 BWN) has transferred from Stagecoach North West and is based at Rugby. A further ex-London Dennis Dart SLF in service is 34121 (V121 MVX), at Leamington.

DAF DB250/Northern Counties Palatine II open-topper 246 (M646 RCP) has been on loan from Ensignbus at Stratford, still carrying Cambridge Tour livery.

Stagecoach West ST

A surprise acquisition for Cheltenham & Gloucester is former Stagecoach London 1967 AEC Routemaster/Park Royal H40/32R RML2657 (NML 657E), which had been stored by Stagecoach North West at Carlisle. Painted in full London Transport livery, it is allocated to Gloucester for special events. Officially its national fleet number is 12657, but it may be renumbered into the Stagecoach heritage series.

More routine arrivals for Cheltenham & Gloucester are, as forecast, three Volvo B10M-55/Northern Counties Paladins from Stagecoach Wales for service 73, DP47F-seated 20869 (P869 MNE) and B48F 20886/92 (P886/92 MNE).

Internal fleet transfers have seen Cheltenham District receive Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 32962 (N62 MTG) from Cheltenham & Gloucester, while Cheltenham & Gloucester has received Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 16449 (N349 HGK) and Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 33967 (X967 AFH) from Swindon & District.

Reinstated from reserve to Cheltenham & Gloucester is Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 32234 (NDZ 3134), while Cheltenham & Gloucester Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash 32313 (N313 AMC) and Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton 42586/8 (T586/8 SKG) have all been placed in reserve.

Tilling green and cream-liveried Dennis/Plaxton Super Pointer Dart 33511 has been repainted, retains its former Bristol Omnibus omo-style livery, although currently it carries no fleetnames.

Iveco Daily/Mellor minibuses 46607 (R607 KDD), latterly a runaround for fitters, has been replaced at Cheltenham & Gloucester by similar Swindon & District 46606 (R606 KDD).

Stagecoach Yorkshire ST

Another Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties H45/26F transferred from Stagecoach North East is 16437 (685 DYE, N337 HGK). Volvo B10M/Jonckheere 52648 (T668 XTV) has been re-registered NHE 340.

New MAN 18.220s 2246-9 carry Town Lines branding for Barnsley local service 11.

Stones, Glazebury, Lances

The first of two more Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts arrived in early May; it is BUS 1N. The second was expected around the end of May. Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts BUS 1N and JB51 BUS were re-registered MG02 NGG/N in readiness for sale.

Summercourt Travel, Cornwall

New in March were Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B32F SF06 FSL/O, which had been pre-registered by Glasgow dealer Blythswood Motors. SF06 FSL has since been re-registered SF54 ADF.

Tanat Valley, Llanrhaeadr-YM

The last Bedford, 353 (B153 JVK) has been sold to Perry, Bromyard along with Dennis Javelin 390 (E905 CRM).

Tate Travel, Darton, S Yorks

Dennis Lance SLF/Wright Pathfinder B34F L29 WLH has been acquired ex-UK North's GM Buses subsidiary. It was one of the pioneer London low-floor buses. Also acquired is plain white Volvo B10M/Van Hool coach RIL 2129.

TM Travel, Chesterfield

VDL SB120/Plaxton Centro YJ07 JVC/E have been repainted in a predominantly blue/white livery for the Tesco customer service in Sheffield.

DAF SB220/Optare Delta 127 (J26 GCX) has gone to A2Z Travel, Walsall, Dennis Dart R83 GNW to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Thamesdown Transport

On order for delivery in the autumn are six Scania K230UB/Wright Solar single-deckers.

An acquisition is 166 (R189 NFE), a 1998 Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B44F from Hornsby, Ashby.

Dennis Dominator 70 (H970 XHR) has been given an all-over blue/white/orange livery for the new Swindon B&Q DIY store, replacing its Priory Vale all-over advert. Dennis Dart SLFs 199, 200 (WV02 NNB/C) lost their Priory Vale branding and instead gained fleet livery with green skirts.

Withdrawn Leyland Fleetline/Alexander AL-type 271 (MFX 171W) has gone to Wigley (dealer), Carlton for scrap.

Thames Travel, Wallingford

Euro4 Alexander Dennis Enviro400 demonstrator SN56 AWW has been on trial.

Below: Stagecoach East Midlands 19132 (FJ07 OSZ), one of the Alexander Dennis Enviro400s branded for the new Robin Hood Airport Lynx routes, in Bawtry. Two of the Enviro200 Dart single-deckers wear a similar livery, while the other two have the same colours applied in Stagecoach style. **MARK LYONS**



GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

F6

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

RO

Rotala

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

T6M

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

VE

Veolia

WG

Wellglade
Group

Transdev Harrogate & District TD

Ex-Lancashire United Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns 1084-7 (PO51 MTX-Z) entered service in May still in their previous operator's blue/cream livery.

Transdev Lancashire United TD

More Spot On-liveried Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urbans identified are 1825/8-30 (YJ07 PBX, PCF/O/U).

Transdev London TD

The new Scania N230UD/East Lancs Olympus for the 148 are not, as expected, SLE65-73, but start a new class, SO1-9 (YN07 LHP/R/T-Z).

Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) has sold Volvo Olympians VA41/2 (R941/2 YOV) to Chambers, Bures and Dualway, Rathcoole, Dublin respectively.

Transdev Yorkshire Coastliner TD

Ten new double-deckers are expected for next year. These are partly to replace older double-deckers and partly to enable the entire service to be operated by double-deckers, with appropriate route changes to avoid the bridge at Goathland and the archway at Castle Howard, which currently mean single-deckers have to be rostered on certain journeys.

Trathens, Plymouth

Transferred from the parent Park, Hamilton fleet in March and April were Volvo B12M/Jonckheere Mistral C53Ft 1-3, 15 RWM, while Volvo B12(T)/Jonckheere double-decker KSK 986 went in the opposite direction and Neoplan Skyliner 519 (YN51 XND) has been sold to Mentor, Hellaby (dealer).

Travellers Choice, Carnforth

Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton coaches WX 7622 (N781 PEC) and 4150 RU (N610 REC) have reverted to their previous registrations, their cherished marks transferring, respectively, to Volvo B12M/Jonckheere PN04 NNR and B12M/Sunsundegui PN04 NNV. B12M/Jonckheere PN03 UCG has been re-registered OW 5371, while B12M/Sunsundegui Siderals PN04 NNT/U have become 8338 RU and 8447 WX respectively.

Travel London NX

Further Dennis Tridents transferred to Travel West Midlands are TA7, 8, 18, 22/3 (V307 KGW etc). The programme to fit all the buses on the Surrey network, apart from Optare Solo, with LED destination displays, was completed in April.

Travel West Midlands NX

The greatest part of a three-year National Express Group order for new Alexander Dennis and Scania buses, announced on 30 May, is destined for this fleet. The 2007 group order calls for 59 Euro4-engined Alexander Dennis Enviro400 double-deckers similar to Euro3-powered 4698 (BX55 XOA), plus five double-deck and 60 single-deck Scania. A further 120 buses (approximately 60 double-deckers and 60 single-deckers) will follow next year and again in 2009, but no details of makes and types have been revealed.

More Dennis Trident/Alexander ALX400s transferred from Travel London are 9707/8/18/22/3 (V307 KGW etc). The PSV Circle reports that 12 are due, for operation from Yardley Wood garage.

Mercedes-Benz Vario 275 (R275 XDA), Leyland Lynx 1312 (G312 EOG), fire-damaged Volvo B10B 1374 (N374 WOH), MCW Metrobuses 2503 (POG 503Y, 3044 (F44 XOF) and Lynx driver trainers 9147, 9265 (G147, 265 EOG) have been withdrawn. Metrobuses sold are 2555 (POG 555Y), 2725 (A725 UOE), 2785/92 (B785/92 AOC) and 3029 (F29 XOF). Lynx 1231 (G231 EOG) has been reinstated.

Trent Barton WG

The new Optare Tempo X1200/B39F for the Black Cat routes are 309-12 (YJ07 VSD-G), featuring wood laminate flooring to create a coffee-shop effect. The Optare Excels displaced by them, 216-9 (W216-9 FRB), are expected to pass to Konectbus.

Optare Solos 450/1 (FE02 KDX/Z) have been repainted in a pink-based livery for the Harlequin-branded Derby-Littleover-Heatherton service, which has been doubled to run every 15min. Volvo B10B-58/Northern Counties Paladin 129 (M129 PRA) has been transferred to Notts & Derby.

Truronian, Truro

Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther C48Ft TR07 TRU was new in April.



Above: Wessex Connect BX07 AYU, the first Plaxton Centro-bodied Volvo B7RLE for this Rotala-owned company's Portway park-&-ride contract in Bristol. DAVID OAKLEY

Trustline, Hertford

New is B29F Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart DES9 (LK07 GTF).

UK North, Manchester

Further disposals to record are of Volvo B10B/Alexander ALX300 T510 APS and Volvo Olympian/East Lancs R371 DJN to GHA, Corwen, Volvo B6s L242 CCK, M420 PVN, M428 RDC to McKindless, Wishaw, Volvo Olympian/East Lancs P342/9 ROO to Wessex Connect, Patchway, R357 XVX, R370 DJN to Stott, Oldham and DAF SB220/Ikarus W178 CDN to Kimes, Folkingham.

Utopia, Allerton Bywater

This Yorkshire operator has Y2, 3 UTO, Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 25/B25F low-floor minibuses for the extension of its Otley-Wetherby service to Tadcaster. One was new this year, the other arrived last year and has been re-registered; we don't know which is which.

Vale, Manchester

Optare Solo SlimLines M780SE 71-3 (MX07 JNJ/K, JPF) have arrived for Greater Manchester PTE tendered service 276 (Wythenshawe Hospital-Trafford General Hospital).

Veolia Cymru VE

The outstanding VDL SB120/Plaxton Centro is confirmed as CN07 FTC. Ex-Dunn-Line Volvo B12M/Plaxton Paragon Expressliners FA04 LJK/L are transferred here.

The first Veolia-liveried vehicle at Llantwit Fardre is B23F Optare Solo M710SL MX56 ABK from Barry and the first ex-Bebb vehicle to receive Veolia corporate livery is Solo CN06 BXL. Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2 B29F R103/5/14 TKO have transferred to Abercynon from Swansea (Pullman).

Leyland Lynx 2 B49F K622/7 YVN have been acquired from Stagecoach North East and are in school bus yellow. Ex-Leaside Travel DAF SB3000/Plaxton T56 AUA appears to have been re-acquired. Ex-Ministry of Defence Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer school coach M213 UNX has been re-registered M601 RTX.

A new depot is to open at Llandrindod Wells to operate contracts won in Powys.

Warrington Borough Transport

Mercedes-Benz Citaro demonstrator BX56 VTP has been on loan.

Weardale, Stanhope

A new addition is 13.8m Neoplan Tourliner N2216SHD/C49Ft YN07 ECC, while a smart secondhand acquisition is former Alfa Travel DAF SB3000WS/Ikarus R119 GNW.

Wessex Connect RO

One of the first Volvo B7RLEs with a Plaxton Centro body is BX07 AYU for the Portway park-&-ride.

Western Greyhound, Summercourt

Mercedes-Benz Varios 558/9/74 (SK02 NZB/C/A) have been re-registered WK02 SAT, SUN, TUE respectively, while 576 (SF03 SCX) has become WK03 BUS and 580 (SF04 HXM) is WK04 WTA.

Wheeler Travel, North Baddesley, Hants

New coaches in April were Scania K114IB4/Irizar C55F

BL/EL07 WTL, while used acquisitions reported by the PSV Circle are of Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/ACI C33F Y668 BKS from Munro, Jedburgh and LDV Convoy/M16 WA03 CTK from source unknown.

Whittle, Kidderminster EY

Four new Volvo B12B/Plaxton coaches acquired to replace remaining Iveco EuroRider/Beulas Stergo Es 1, 4, 29 and 37 (FJ03 ZTT/S/P/X) are Paragon C53F-bodied 78/9 (YX07 HKJ/K) and 12.23m Panther Centenary C49Ft-bodied 80/1 (YX07 HKL/M).

Transferred from East Yorkshire are Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS DP48F 44 (M419 RRN) and B29F-seated Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 49 (W461 UAG), while Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 50 (S250 XUJY) has gone to East Yorkshire and Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Paramount 3200 12 (SJ 4712) has been withdrawn for scrapping.

Wiltax Buses, New Haw, Surrey

This operator has took over seven Surrey County Council services, three buses, eight employees and the adjacent Canal Bridge Industrial Estate, New Haw depot of Rotala-owned Flights Hallmark's Surrey Connect bus operation on 4 June.

The three buses — which are being rebranded with Wiltax fleetnames — are TransBus Enviro300/B44F SN04 EFH, Scania L94UB/Wright Access Flioline B42F V140 XLV (new to Appleby's) and DAF DB250/Northern Counties Palatine II H43/29F (new to Harris Bus).

The routes taken over are 400 (Shepperton-Staines via Charlton and Ashford), 472 (Byfleet-Woking via New Haw), 690 (Worplesdon-Kingfield Green via St John's), 801 (Hinchley Wood-Kingston, Tiffin Girls' School via Esher), 862 (Oxshott-Leatherhead), E303 (Windlesham-Collingwood College) and E315 (Salesian School, Chertsey, school coach contract).

Wilts & Dorset GA

Volvo B7TL/East Lancs Millennium Vyking CO49/29F 408/9 (HF05 GGO/P) have returned to Solent Blue Line to operate its New Forest Tour.

Wings, Uxbridge

BX07 NKE, a Mercedes-Benz Tourino/C34Ft, is the sixth example for this fleet, which operates more Tourino midicoaches than any other UK operator.

Woottons, Chesham

Two additional Volvo B10Ms acquired in April were ex-Horseman, Reading Jonckheere Deauville 45 C57F-bodied L901 NWW and former Ulsterbus Plaxton Premiere C70F-bodied DAZ 1557. They join identical L904 NWW and DAZ 1562, acquired in January, since re-registered JIL 2199 and BIG 7048.

Further re-registrations are Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther YN06 MXV to W100 TEN, Bristol VRT/ECW HSV 673 to JWW 272W, Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere P288 ENT, R186 TKU, R551 TKV to B10/2 WTN, HSV 673 and B10M/Berkhof Excellence N903 ABL to WJI 2849.

Ex-Oxford Leyland Leopard/Willowbrook Warrior ABW 310X (VUD 33X) is back in service.

Wythenshawe Mobile, Manchester

A type still rare on local bus services is represented here by

HALFCABS ETCETERA

JOHN G. LIDSTONE's quarterly update on older British buses at home and abroad

Bristol VRT

Swerve to Suave, Reading is using ECW-bodied VRT/SL3 KOO 792V, new to Eastern National, as a corporate hospitality vehicle at music festivals and other outdoor events.

Daniel Stazicker reports that Bristol VR VRT/SL3 DHW 350W (new to Bristol Omnibus Company) has just ended its career with the Iceland YMCA for a youth project and has gone into long term store in Iceland.

Leyland Atlantean

The Big Diner Bus Company, Newton-le-Willows has acquired former Ipswich Roe-bodied AN68/1R 30 (SDX 30R) from Jay Bee Film & TV of Barnsley.

Further to his feature article in this month's *Buses*, Tom Johnson reports that ORS 207R, an Alexander-bodied AN68A/1R new to Grampian, arrived on Malta late last year. Unusually, it retains its British registration and is used as a display bus on Malta and the neighbouring island of Gozo.

MCW Metrobus

In Ireland, Darren Hall reports that Ideas in Motion, an Ashbourne-based company specialising in using buses in marketing and promotional projects, has former London M409, 864, 1076, 1173/93 and 1372. M1372, now registered 85 D 8399 was used for an advertising campaign during the recent Irish general election, as a 'battle bus' promoting the country's iconic brand of Tayto crisps.

Optare MetroRider

McColl, the newsagent, at Kelvedon Hatch, Essex has acquired MetroRider P423 VRG as a promotional vehicle.

Volvo Olympian

Alexander Royale-bodied ex-London United Airbus N118 UHP is with the KC21 church in Aldershot, which has a long tradition in operating unusual buses, its last having been a left-hand-drive former demonstrator Leyland Olympian. The vehicle sees many uses with the local youth and elderly people.

Right: Former Translink Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Bristol RELL6Gs UOI 2367 and BXI 2588 operating for S&A Produce.

Right: This unidentified Bristol Lodekka FLF was being used in an election campaign in Benidorm, Spain in May. TOMMY BRYCELAND

Centre: Ex-London Metrobus M1372 advertising Tayto crisps during the Irish general election campaign. DARREN HALL

S&A Produce, Marden, Herefordshire

Martin Perry of Wacton Coach Sales advises that S&A — Europe's biggest strawberry grower — is operating 21 psv-licensed buses (on its own operator licence) this year to carry over 3,500 Eastern European fruit pickers between their accommodation village and local farms.

S&A owns ex-Go North East Leyland National 2s UPT 662V and FTN 703/5/14W and ex-Stagecoach North East Scania N113CRB/Alexander PS-types F903/9/11/6/20 JRG. Wacton is hiring it a further 11 vehicles, Leyland Lynx G617/9 CEF and G123/83/90, 315 EOG, Leyland National 2 B363 LOY, Leyland Leopard/East Lancs rebodied PNY 391R and ex-Translink Bristol RELL6G/Alexander (Belfast) BXI 2588 and



YN07 NUK, a new Plaxton Pronto-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter operated on tendered services including evening journeys on route 168 (Chorlton-Belle Vue).

York Pullman

Open-top Bristol VRT VDV 140S is numbered 199.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

JERSEY

Connex VE

New Optare Solos noted are 672/3/5 (J 108028/9/31). It is presumed there is also a 674 (J 108030). Three of the Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Cheetahs noted are 652/61/5 (J 108010/7/21).

Pure Adventure

Alan Le Breton reports that this operator began operating a replacement vehicle across the beach to Elizabeth Castle 1km offshore from 2 June. The company took over the route from Puddleducks, which had been using three 20-year-old locally built amphibious vehicles (see April *Buses*)

Right: Wythenshawe Mobile's new Plaxton Pronto-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter, YN07 NUK, operating a tendered evening journey on service 168, which Stagecoach Manchester provides commercially during the day.

CHRIS LOWE



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Thanks to each of the following correspondents for your contributions to Fleet News by letter and e-mail: Peter Bannister, Matthew Barker, Cliff Beeton, Irvine Bell, Cambridge Omnibus Society, Roger A. Capel, Christopher Carter, Andrew P. Churchill, David Clark, Brian Coney, Crosville Enthusiasts' Club, Richard Field, GMTS Journal, Richard Godfrey, Jack Grove, Mark Haldon, Paul Harvey, Barry Hayes, Steven E. Hodgson, Tony Hunter, Ipswich Bus Page (www.ipswichbus.co.uk), J. Jones, J. B. Kirby, Steven Knight, Alan Le Breton, Chris Lowe, LOTS, Peter Lockhart, Mark Lyons, M&D and East Kent Bus Club, Dave Mabbotts, Calum MacLennan, Merseyside Bus Club, Metro Transport News, Simon Nicholas, David Oakley, Deric Pemberton, John Podgorski, PSV Circle, Dave Robinson, Dave Russell, Phil Shafe, Richard Sharman, Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiasts' Society, David Slater, Adrian Small, R. G. Smith, Southdown Enthusiasts Club, Alan Spencer, Daniel Stazicker, Gary Steel, Christopher Stewart, Jeff Tattersall, Thamesdown Transport, Nick Thomson, Andrew P. Tyldsley, United Enthusiasts' Club, Trevor Watson, Steve White's website (www.spw24.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk), Stephen Whiteley, Malcolm Yeomans, John Young, Russell Young

■ My sincere thanks also this month to Stephen Morris and Alan Millar for compiling much of this month's column, as my father, Geoffrey Lidstone, was critically ill in hospital during the period I would normally work on Fleet News and, sadly, he died on 9 May. I am most grateful for their kindness and understanding at this time of great personal loss.

We are sure that readers will join us in offering John Lidstone our condolences at this sad time — Ed.

GROUP CODES

- AA Arriva Passenger Services
- DG Comfort Delgro
- EB Ensignbus
- EY EYMS Group
- FG FirstGroup
- GA Go-Ahead Group
- NX National Express Group
- RO Rotata
- ST Stagecoach Group
- TD Transdev
- TGM Tellings - Golden Miller
- VE Veolia
- WG Wellglade Group

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to:
**Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park,
 Glasgow, G41 4AF. Email buses@fsmail.net to reach
 him by 18 July for the September issue.**

AAA Coaches, Kirknewton

Ford-bodied Ford Transit SC53 VPP was sold to Plaxton (dealer), Anston in April.

Allan, Gorebridge

C32F-seated Mercedes-Benz Tourino BX56 VUA was new last October and re-registered B13 DWA in January. Other re-registrations in January comprised Irizar-bodied Scania K124EB4 B13 DWA to SK06 FBV then B18 DWA; and Mercedes-Benz Tourino O510 B18 DWA to C10 DWA.

Allan & Black, Aboyne

Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 C10 BOY (F694 ACX) was acquired last August ex-Golden Boy, Hoddesdon 428 and immediately reverted to F694 ACX.

Arriva Scotland West AA

Arriva 'express'-liveried, B29F-seated Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart demonstrator SN56 AWZ was on loan at Inchinnan depot for a few days in May.

Following a tendering exercise carried out by BAA Glasgow, this company has registered the Glasgow Airport-Glasgow, Buchanan Bus Station service 500, which Arriva and Fairline Coaches have operated for many years on behalf of Scottish Citylink as service 905. The start date is to be 9 July, branded as Glasgow Flyer.

Optare MetroRider MR17 2756 (P220 SGB) was transferred to Arriva North East in February.

Ayrways, Patna

East Lancs-bodied Scania N113DRB G807 LAG passed to Humphries, Deadmans Cross in January.

Bain, Oldmeldrum

B55F-seated BMC Falcon 1100FE BX06 OCZ was new by August 2006 but has not been recorded until now. BMC Probus 850 SV54 CKU has been re-registered P80 BMC.

King Long BX56 XAE was noted in use at the end of May, presumably on demonstration duties.

Brown, Broxburn

Three new Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B12B coaches were due to arrive in May.

Bulldog, Bathgate

Optare Sigma B47F-bodied Dennis Lance 11SDA N401 MPN was acquired last September ex-Brighton & Hove 101. Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SF03 SCX passed to Western Greyhound, Summercourt last September.

City Sightseeing Edinburgh LB

Vehicles transferred to City Sightseeing Edinburgh Ltd. from the Edinburgh Tours fleet in March comprised open-top Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents 31-4 (W631-4 PSX), partial open-top Alexander RH-bodied Leyland Olympians 307-11 (E307-11 MSG), and open-top Alexander-bodied Dennis Tridents 501-3 (T501-3 SSG).

Crawford, Kirkintilloch

Optare StarRider-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D M3 (1709 AC, H841 UUA) was re-registered H841 UUA in March before it passed to Hill, Hepharn. Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin W293 DYG then become 1709 AC.

Crawford, Neilston

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D MX06 ONZ was new in April.

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62s HCC 440, 974 (L708/9 PHE) and similar B12M S21 HCC (SJ04 LLE) were re-registered NSK 920/19, HCC 974 respectively in May last year. More re-registrations took place in April this year, comprising Bova Futura FHD10-340 OO06 HCC to S20 HCC; Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D MX06 ONZ to OO06 HCC; Plaxton Cheetham-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D S20 HCC (W637 MKY) to W637 MKY; Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62s S26/7 HCC (Y286/7 TSU) to HCC 100, 974; similar B12B HCC 100 and B12M HCC 974 (S21 HCC, SJ04 LLE) to S26/7 HCC.

Right: SK07 HLJ, one of the two new short wheelbase Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts for Dumfries & Galloway Council's DGC Buses operation, at its formal launch on 29 May.
 COLIN DOUGLAS

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D W637 MKY (S20 HCC, W637 HKY) was sold to Blythswood (dealer), Glasgow in April.

Davies, Plean

Alexander (Belfast) H47/27D-bodied Leyland Olympian ON2R H699 PVW (91 D 1071), previously Dublin Bus RH71, was acquired in May.

Deveron, Macduff

Optare Solo M850s MX05 EMF (B28F-seated) and MX06 ABV were new in April 2005 and May 2006 respectively, but have not been recorded until now.

Dickson, Paisley

Plaxton B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L642 DNA was acquired in April ex-Dunn, Port Glasgow.

Docherty, Glasgow

This operator's Beta Buses company is starting a daily Glasgow Sightseeing Tour on 6 July, taking in George Square, Glasgow Green, Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre and Glasgow University.

Donaldson, St Andrews

Esker Touring C37F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Atego 1523L SK07 FBB was new in March.

Dumfries & Galloway Council

B29F-seated Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts SK07 HLH/J were delivered in full DGC Buses red and yellow fleet livery in May. Funded by Swestrans, they will be operated out of Tongland depot on schools services and local services 520 and 555.

Dunn, Port Glasgow

Two Mercedes-Benz minibuses taken into stock recently are Alexander (Belfast) B23F-bodied N362 AVV and Alexander B23F-bodied 711D N465 RVK, previously numbered 40162, 40465 in the Stagecoach group. They are being used in red and white livery with no fleetnames.

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L642 DNA was acquired in April by Dickson, Paisley.

Edinburgh Tours LB

Alexander ALX400-bodied Dennis Trident 502 (T502 SSG) was converted from H49/25D to O51/23F and repainted into City Sightseeing red livery in March.

Vehicles transferred to City Sightseeing Edinburgh in March comprised Plaxton President-bodied Tridents 31-4 (W631-4 PSX), Alexander RH-bodied Leyland Olympians 307-11 (E307-11 MSG) and Alexander-bodied Tridents 501-3 (T501-3 SSG).

First Aberdeen FG

Wright Eclipse Urban B44F-bodied Volvo B7RLEs 69126/31 (SV07 EHCH) arrived in April and have Purple Line branding for service 22 (Heathryfold-Mastrick).

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50426/7 (H39, 35 USO) left the fleet by April. A temporary depot at Kittybrewster is to be used for certain vehicles, including the heritage fleet, during reconstruction of the King Street site.

First Glasgow FG

New Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs 37166-85 are H45/29F. 37166/9-75/7/9 (SF07 FCP/DD/E/G/K/M)

were delivered as SF56 NCC/U/N/O/X-Z, NDD/G. Similar B9TLs 37187-91/4, 37200-2 (SF07 FDZ, FCC-E/G, FEH, FCP/M/O) arrived in May and also entered service from Larkfield depot. There are visual differences between the bodies on the two chassis types.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus 38129 [AH103] (K129 GNH) has been converted to a driver trainer and repainted into training livery with the standard 'training vehicle' lettering over its destination display. It is the first double-deck trainer for many years.

Optare Solo 53201 (YJ54 BSV) has been repainted into Strathclyde Partnership for Transport carmine and cream. Volvo B10BLE 61653 (SJ51 DJO) has been given an allover advertisement for Amazonia at Strathclyde Park, including contravision treatment on all windows except the front, door and cab. It is mainly white with fleet livery retained on the front. Volvo B7RLE 69120 (SF06 HBB) carries an allover contravision advertisement for M&D's Theme Park at Strathclyde Park and is multi-coloured with fleet livery on the front.

Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Trident 32837 (T837 LLC) was modified from H39/20D to H39/23F around April.

AEC Routemasters 39553 (JJD 553D) and 39677 (SMK 677F) were sold to Roulston, Glasgow in April, but it is not known in what capacity they will be used. Another notable departure to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall around then was of East Lancs-bodied Scania K93CRB 61666 (TIB 8512, L321 VHS), one of a trio of unusual dual-purpose vehicles bought new by Strathclyde Buses in 1993.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean PDR1A/1 LA517 (XGA 15J), new to Glasgow Corporation in 1970, has been secured for preservation in the Glasgow area; its last owner was Woolley, Llanedwen, North Wales.

New daily, hourly motorway express service X7 (Glasgow, Buchanan Bus Station-Strathclyde Country Park) starts on 30 June and will operate throughout the summer until 20 August. From 1 July, the Braehead Bullet service between Partick Interchange and Braehead shopping centre/Xscape will be replaced by revised service 747 operating between Partick Interchange and Glasgow Airport via Southern General Hospital, Ikea store, Braehead shopping centre and Renfrew. This forms part of the service for which Bus Route Development Grant has been requested, a decision on which is still awaited from the Scottish Executive. Among other service changes to be implemented at the beginning of July was to extend each end of route 92 (Partick Interchange-Gartnavel Hospital) to operate between Radnor Street and Drumchapel.

Goosecroft, Denny

M16-bodied LDV Convoy minibus X164 WCW was acquired in April.

Hall, Kennoway

Recent acquisitions comprise Aitken B24FL-bodied Renault S56 K840 BSG ex-Mobus, Leven M20 in December; Frank Guy M14-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 411CDI X151 ENJ ex-Tellings-Golden Miller in December; and Northern Counties H47/30F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONCL10/1RZ F255 YJT ex-Arriva Fox County 4505 in April.

MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus A144 AMO was sold to Ensign (dealer), Purfleet in April.



SCOTTISH COLUMN

SANDY MACDONALD



Glasgow TRC approved in record time

Only a few weeks after the application for it was first published, the Scottish traffic commissioner has applied a traffic regulation condition (TRC) within Glasgow city centre, which should be a significant control on the behaviour of all bus operators in the area concerned.

Glasgow City Council, supported by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, had applied for the condition to permit it to control the stopping places of local bus services within the city centre. As requested, it applies throughout the area bounded by the M8 motorway to the north and west, Castle Street/High Street/Saltmarket to the east (these streets being included within the boundary) and the River Clyde to the south.

The condition requires that services a) stop to set down and uplift passengers only at locations recognised and designated as bus stops or bus stands by the traffic

authority, b) only use bus stops and bus stands, allocated to that particular service, which are determined by Glasgow City Council and c) between 07.30 and 18.30, may stop at bus stops only for the minimum period necessary for the safe setting down and uplifting of passengers. This restriction does not apply to marked bus stands.

One-Ticket expands to become multi-modal

Travelling across south-east and central Scotland became easier from 21 May with the launch of One-Ticket's new combined rail and bus ticket.

Most bus and train operators have come together to create the new One-Ticket, including First ScotRail, GNER, Virgin Trains, Lothian Buses, First Edinburgh, Stagecoach, E. & M. Horsburgh, Bulldog Travel and Eve Cars & Coaches. The ticket covers 59 rail stations throughout the area, including the Lothians, Fife, Stirling,

Dundee and Perth. The new range of tickets is available from staffed rail stations; day, seven-day, 28-day and annual bus tickets are offered while rail tickets are available as weekly, monthly and annual tickets. Day bus tickets start at £3.60, seven-day train and bus tickets at £25.

One-Ticket — a 'partnership' between transport operators and the member councils of South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (Sestran) — at last gives these parts of Scotland a travel ticket to match the well-established range of multi-operator, multi-modal Zonecard (and its predecessor Transcard) tickets available throughout most of the Strathclyde PTE area in west central Scotland for around two decades, valid on the services of more than 80 bus and rail operators.

The original One-Ticket bus-only scheme was launched in East Lothian and Edinburgh in May 2001, with Scottish Executive funding, to create a multi-operator ticketing system complying with the requirements of the Office of Fair Trading, with the aim of encouraging greater use of public transport services.

Bus-only tickets remain widely available from over 600 PayPoint outlets, online and by phone.

Harlequin, Dunblane

Stirling Council summer service C20 (Stirling Bus Station-Trossachs Pier via Aberfoyle and Callander) is to be operated from 30 June until 14 October, daily except Wednesdays.

Henderson, Hamilton

Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Dart demonstrator SN56 AYA was used on service 71 (Glasgow-Torrance) in mid-May.

Highland Country RN

Alexander Dennis Enviro300s SN56 AXR-T, new in January, have been numbered 222-4 and are B60F rather than B52F as previously reported. Fiat Ducato 017 (YX07 DXC) was new in March but no further details are available.

Five Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs were delivered in May, although two are to be allocated to Orkney Coaches rather than this fleet. Four of them, SY07 CEX, CFA/DU, were launched at Inverness Castle on 18 May and feature a new livery of blue with a bright green skirt, darker green leaves on the side panels and transport solutions for our Scotland's future legend above the windows. These buses have been partly funded by Hitrans. SY07 CEX, CFA/DU subsequently entered service from Inverness depot, numbered 227-9.

Vehicles acquired around March comprised Plaxton Premiere C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s DAZ 1561, EAZ 2575 ex-Ulsterbus 1561/75; Van Hool Alizée C49Fi-bodied Volvo B10M-62 PSU 954 (N415 PYS, KSK 980) and similar C53F-bodied KBZ 4631 (N527 PYS, LSK 473,

LSK 875), both ex-Flights Hallmark, Hounslow (but new to Park, Hamilton). EAZ 2575 has been numbered 687.

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D 083 (N103 WRC) and Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 542 (YX05 FEK) were transferred back from Orkney Coaches around March, together with Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 673 (ESK 985, L673 OHL).

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60s 679 (JIL 8813, J750 CWT), 680 (SIL 1895, J261 NNC) have been re-seated C67F ex-C51F, and C70F ex-C49Fi respectively. In March, Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 672/4 were still C53F and C49Fi respectively, rather than C70F as previously reported.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 624 (N583 DAS, ESK 934, N139 YST) was re-registered TJI 7192 by March.

The latest recipients of blue and navy bus livery to be reported comprise Leyland Olympian 364; Volvo B10M-62s 629/71/5/82; Dennis Javelin 664/78; and Volvo B10M-60s 616/79. Volvo B10M-62 673 is all-over white.

Vehicles that left the fleet by the end of last year include Ford-bodied Ford Transit 039 (N11 JDP); Alexander P-bodied Volvo B10M-55 167 (C55 HOM); Marshall-bodied MAN 11.220 201 (S388 JPS); ECW-bodied Bristol VRTs 308 (HKM 884V), 328 (PWY 49W); MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus 351 (B803 AOP); Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60 406 (MIL 9755, G811 BPG); Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-61 454 (KLZ 2318, D181 TSB); Duple-bodied Volvo B10M-61 459 (D660 XPS); and Leyland Lynx 515 (G132 EOG).

Further departures by March comprised Leyland National NL116L11/1R 133 (OSK 620V, DOC 36V);

East Lancs-bodied Volvo B10M-61s 164 (MBZ 6454, URY 598, B572 AVW), 165 (HIL 7467, NRV 859Y, 3408 WY, FUA 387Y); Alexander P-bodied Volvo B10M-55s 168/70 (C56/8 HOM); Leyland National 11351/1Rs 181 (JST 224N, KKZ 5534, GFJ 663N, JIL 7606, GFJ 663N), 182 (KRE 278P, LIL 3059, KRE 278P), 183 (KHT 121P); ECW-bodied Bristol VRT 330 (VAH 280X); Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-56 450 (C166 CST, JAZ 9855, 318 DHR, ESK 983, C330 FSU); Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-60s 462/3 (MIL 9754/6, G251/2 VPK), 468 (H410 DPS, KLZ 2316, H410 DPS); and Leyland Lynx 502/4/17/24/6 (G83, 103/50/73/6 EOG).

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 644 (ESK 934, T131 AST) was transferred to Orkney Coaches around March.

Horsburgh, Pumphreston

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian C786 SFS passed to McColl, Balloch in March.

Irvine, Law

Bova Magiq MHD122-410 SK07 FOM was new in April and Plaxton Primo demonstrator AE07 AUO was on loan during May.

Jay, Greengairs

Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa B55-10 LHS 747V had left this fleet by March and is in private preservation as Kelvin Central Buses 1967 at the Beith Transport Museum (see p66).

Kinell, Fraserburgh

Van Hool Alizée C49Fi-bodied Scania K124IB4 SM02 GSM was acquired in May ex-MacPhail, Salsburgh.

Lochs, Leurbost

Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s Y504/6 TGJ arrived in March ex-Tellings-Golden Miller.

Leyland Royal Tiger Doyen PBZ 1534 (D458 EEG), LDV Convoys P920 YGE and AE51 KWH (acquired in 2005 but not recorded) left the fleet some time ago. Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin R917 HTW was sold to Western Isles Council in March.

Lochs & Glens, Aberfoyle

Bova Futura tri-axle coach LG05 BCL (WA05 DFE) of Burton, Haverhill carries Lochs & Glens livery for sub-contract work.

Lothian LB

New Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs 138-45 (SK07 CGV/X/Y, CFO/P/U/V/X) had arrived by May and are in the same scarlet, green, madder and gold version of harlequin livery as 136/7. Branding on these buses is for service 29 (The Best Deal). Similar 146-50 (SK07 CFY/Z,

...continued overleaf



Below: Highland Country 229 (SY07 CFU), one of the new Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs, in the new blue and green livery with owner Rapsons' fleetnames. STEVE MASKELL

CGE-G) also arrived then and are in generic harlequin livery. They entered service from 28 May.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian driver trainer TB315 (E315 MSG) was re-registered E422 RSC in March, when its registration was transferred to Edinburgh Tours Olympian 875 (Fleet News Scotland, May).

Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians 814/26/7/9/33 (G814/26/7/9/33 GSX) were sold to McDade, Uddingston by May. Similar Volvo Olympians 960/1/3-5 (L960/1/3-5 MSC) were supplied to Stagecoach Fife then but were immediately leased to Rennie, Dunfermline as a means of updating its double-deck fleet used on Fife Council school contracts.

McColi, Balloch

ECW H51/32D-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2R C786 SFS was acquired in March ex-Horsburgh, Pumpherton.

McDade, Uddingston

Alexander H51/30D-bodied Leyland Olympians G814/26/7/9/33 GSX were purchased from Lothian Buses by May, having been numbered 814/26/7/9/33 in that fleet. Northern Counties H43/28F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1R A104 OUG was also acquired then ex-Rennie, Dunfermline.

MacDonald, Howmore

Plaxton C57F-bodied Dennis Javelin 11SDA AJZ 9204 (F490 WPR) was acquired last September ex-Tedd, Old Sarum. Earlier acquisitions not previously reported are LDV Convoy AF02 RZT and Mercedes-Benz OUI 3813 but further details are not known.

McGill, Greenock

Bova Futura FHD12-340s GM/SM04 GSM have entered service with prominent McGill's fleetnames and small Smoothiecruiser logos, rather than the highly visible Smoothiecruiser branding carried on earlier coaches. They have been given electronic destination displays and branding for the Glasgow-Largs service.

Wright Cadet-bodied DAF SB120 SF53 KGE has been branded for service 902 (Greenock-Paisley via Glasgow Airport) including large, Glasgow Airport-style aircraft motifs towards the rear on each side.

Previously mentioned services 903 (Glasgow, Buchanan bus station-Balloch) and 904 (Glasgow, Buchanan bus station-Helensburgh) are due to start on 8 September.

McKindless, Wishaw

Plaxton Pointer 2 B34D-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 01 D 34168/70/2/3/5, 39111/4 were acquired in April, having previously been with the former ComfortDelGro Aerdtart operation in Dublin. More former Stagecoach group vehicles to join the fleet by May comprise Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50s M420 PVN, M428 RDC and Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs C609/10 LFT.

Service 62, extended to operate between Fairley and Parkhead Forge on 4 April, reverts to its previous route between Fairley and Glasgow Cross from 9 July.

MacPhail, Salsburgh

Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B12BT SK07 FTV was new in April. Similar Volvo B10M-62 MUI 5608 (R908 YBA) passed to Jones, Pwllheli in April and Scania K124IB4 SM02 GSM was acquired by Kineil, Fraserburgh in May.

Mac Tours, Edinburgh LB

AEC Routemasters 13 (CUV 210C), 14 (803 DYE, EDS 221A, 10 CLT), 15 (858 DYE, LDS 239A, WLT 727), 16 (WLT 371, EDS 281A, WLT 371), 19, 20 (NMY 646/34E); Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians 333-8/57/8 (E333-5 MSG, G336-8 CSG, F357/8 WSC); and Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian 433 (P433 KSX) were transferred to Majestic Tours in March.

Majestic Tours LB

As noted above, vehicles transferred to this fleet from Mac Tours in March comprised AEC Routemasters 13 (CUV 210C), 14 (803 DYE, EDS 221A, 10 CLT), 15 (858 DYE, LDS 239A, WLT 727), 16 (WLT 371, EDS 281A, WLT 371), 19, 20 (NMY 646/34E); Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians 333-8/57/8 (E333-5 MSG, G336-8 CSG, F357/8 WSC); and Alexander Royale-bodied Volvo Olympian 433 (P433 KSX).

Marbill, Beith

C70F-seated Bova Futura FLD120-365s SF07 NLUW/X-Z were new in April.



Above: Lothian Buses also has new Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs, of which route branded 146 (SK07 CFY) was photographed in George Street, Edinburgh on 28 May. DONALD STIRLING



Above: Mathieson's D&E Coaches B9 YST is one of two Berkhof-bodied Dennis Lance SLFs acquired ex-Brighton & Hove. They were part of a batch of five new to Stagecoach East Kent for Canterbury park-&-ride services and were sold to Brighton & Hove when it took over Stagecoach's Lewes-area services in 2005, but were withdrawn after passenger complaints about their under-ventilated bodies on hot summer days last year. The other three of the batch are now in Scotland, with Bulldog of Bathgate. STEVE MASKELL

Marshall, Baillieston

Van Hool Alizée C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R132 JGA (WSC 571, R132 JGA) was added to this fleet in April ex-Clyde Coast, Ardrossan.

Mathieson (D&E Coaches), Inverness

The second Berkhof 2000 B40F-bodied Dennis Lance 11SDA owned by this firm is B9 YST (M404 OKM, 414 DCD, M404 OKM). It joined the fleet in December ex-Brighton & Hove 281 and was given its current registration in January.

MCT, Motherwell

Jonckheere C49F-bodied Volvo B12M SJ04 KBK (KSK 948, LSK 444) was acquired in March ex-Park, Hamilton and given Glenton Tours livery.

Miller, Airdrie

Autobus C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D LUI 5800 (J712 BAO) was acquired in March ex-Farrell, Thornton. Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger CIB 3202 (A402 HRJ) passed then to McLean, Chapelhall.

Mitchell, Pleau

Berkhof C57F-bodied Dennis Javelin T3 NDS (T850 ARV) was acquired in April ex-Robinson, Kimbolton.

Mobus, Leven

Aitken-bodied Renault S56 M20 (K840 BSG) passed to Hall, Kennoway last December.

Moffat & Williamson, St Fort

Jonckheere C48F-bodied Volvo B12M YC02 DGO arrived in March ex-WA Shearings 476, together with similar Plaxton Paragon C49F-bodied YN04 WTT ex-Logan, Dunloy. The former is on loan from Plaxton (dealer), Anston.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-46 121 ASV (E593 UHS) and Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 FSU 374 (N80 TGM) regained their original registrations in March before leaving the fleet.

Morrin Group, Renfrew

Former Stagecoach Fife Alexander (Belfast) B23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40795 (N345 KKH) and similar Alexander-bodied 40468 (N468 RVK) are recent additions.

N468 RVK, Wadham Stringer-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D N801 FSD and Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart

K103 OMW have been repainted into an eye-catching new livery of purple, red and grey with yellow fleetnames.

Orkney Coaches RN

Two of the five new Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLEs delivered to the Rapson Group in May are joining this fleet, including 230 (SY07 CFD), which was one of the four launched at Inverness Castle on 18 May, in the blue and green livery. The second vehicle will be numbered 231.

Former Ulsterbus Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 681/3 were repainted into the blue and navy bus livery by March, although 683 was then still C53F rather than C70F.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-61 401 (MIL 9753, TRM 144, ESK 985, F306 URLU) was re-registered F259 VJS by March, when it was in storage at Wick (on the mainland) together with Plaxton-bodied Scania K93CRB 403 and Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-61s 439/44.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 673 (ESK 985, L673 OHL) was transferred to Highland Country around March.

Park, Hamilton

Jonckheere CH57/14Ct-bodied Volvo B12(T) KSK 986 was transferred to this fleet from Trathens, Plymouth in March.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12M SJ04 KBK (KSK 948, LSK 444) was acquired in March by MCT, Motherwell.

Petrie (JP Coaches), Forfar

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday Dial-a-Ride service 123, covering Forfar, Noranside, Brechin, Aberlemno, Pitkenney and Careston was registered from 15 May.

Port Glasgow Travel, Skelmorlie

The first vehicle recorded with Port Glasgow Travel, which had still to obtain an operator licence at the time of writing, is former Ariva Scotland West and McGill, Greenock Wadham Stringer-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L970 VGE. It was being used in May as a mobile recruitment and advertising board parked in a prominent location in the centre of Greenock.

Prentice, West Calder

KX07 HDV, a B28F-seated Plaxton Primo, was new in April and C55F-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 FN04 CZZ arrived then ex-Reay, Wigton.

Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 YSV 607 (H882 AVK, H5 DTS, H882 AVK) was re-registered JBZ 3675 in April,

allowing Bova Futura FHD12-340 36 RP (SF03 AXJ) to become YSV 607 at the same time.

Pride of the Clyde, Port Glasgow

Caetano Enigma-bodied Volvo B12Bs SF07 DMON and Bova SF07 LLP were new additions to this fleet by May.

Rennie, Dunfermline

At least 10 Volvo Olympians were leased from Stagecoach Fife in May in order to upgrade the fleet of vehicles used on Fife Council school transport contracts.

The vehicles concerned comprise Stagecoach Alexander DPH47/28F-bodied 16359 (N359 MPN), Northern Counties H45/29F-bodied 16406/16/39 (M306/16 DGP, N339 HGK), Alexander H51/36F-bodied 16641 (P271 VPV) and Alexander H51/30D-bodied 16890/1/3-5 (L960/1/3-5 MSC). 16359, 16641 have recently been transferred from Stagecoach North West, 16406/16/39 have come from the Stagecoach Fife fleet and 16890/1/3-5 had just been acquired by Stagecoach from Lothian Buses, where they were numbered 960/1/3-5. The former Lothian vehicles entered service in all-over white but the others were initially put to work still in Stagecoach livery but with Rennie legal lettering.

Leyland-bodied Leyland Titan A842 SUL (BHZ 9545, A842 SUL) passed to KJB, Lincoln in March and Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1R A104 OUG to McDade, Uddingston in May. Other vehicles withdrawn in May as a consequence of the arrival of the Stagecoach buses include Leyland Titans OHV 721, 812Y; A938 SYE; A628 THV and MCW Metrobuses KYV 765X; B132, 209 WUL.

Scotbus, Inverness

Highland Council summer service 708 (Inverness Bus Station-Inverewe Gardens) is to operate each day from 28 May until 30 September this year, and on similar dates in subsequent years.

Shuttle Buses, Kilwinning

The registration for Strathclyde Partnership for Transport service 311 (Kilwinning, Pennyburn Roundabout-Irvine, Riverside Business Park) has been cancelled from 14 July.

Silverdale, New Stevenston

A most unusual acquisition by this operator is Irisbus Agora Line GX07 ARF, which was new in May and operates on service 16 (Cambrook-Kirkwood) in fleet livery.

Smith, Coupar Angus

Sitar Beluga C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815Ds SP07 ENW-Y were new in March and Optare Solo M880 demonstrator YK56 ASV was on loan then.

Ford-bodied Ford Transit W232 EES (SIL 8897) passed to Baines, Derwen in February.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

New East Lancs Kinetic-bodied MAN 18.220 22507 (SP56 AGU) entered service in March rather than February, but similar 22502 did not enter service until April with the result that its 56-plate was cancelled and it was registered SP07 EWL instead.



Left and inset: L964/3 MSC, two of the ex-Lothian Volvo Olympians leased from Stagecoach, were among 14 double-deckers that Rennie's of Dunfermline provided to transport Edinburgh Scouts to a centenary event at Dalmeny House over the late-May bank holiday weekend. All the leased buses, including those in Stagecoach livery, carry Rennie legal lettering. DAVID LOVE/PHIL HALEWOOD

New Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo B12B coaches 54016/7 (SV07 ADO/U) arrived in March and 54018-22 (SV07 CAA/E/O/U/V) in April. One further vehicle of this type, to be numbered 54035, is due.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian 16861 (N861 VHH) was transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Western in April.

All-over white Alexander Dennis Enviro300 demonstrator KW02 DRO (BN02 EDN) was received on loan at Perth from 21 April.

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814Ds 42355/6 (S355/6 KEF) were transferred to Stagecoach Fife in April. Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10MA-55 articulated coaches 51061 (YSV 730, N561 SJ/F), 51062 (VCS 391, N562 SJ/F) and similar Plaxton-bodied 51070 (WLT 720, P670 LWB) were returned to Stagecoach Western then. Neoplan Skyliner N122/3Ls 50130-2/45/6 (SV54 ELUW/X, YN05 WEC/F) were also transferred to Stagecoach Western in April/May. Plaxton Expressliner-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52309 (N620 USS, FSU 739, N620 USS) was transferred to Stagecoach Strathtay in May.

Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN 24.350 double-deckers 50042/8/53/4/8 (T42/8, 53/4/8 BBW), 50040/55 (T614/7 DWL, T40, 55 UBE) were sold to Plaxton (dealer), Anston in April. Leyland-bodied Leyland Titans 10560, 10751 (NUW 560Y, OHV 751Y) were sold for scrap in May.

Stagecoach Fife ST

Two additional new Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7Rs allocated to this fleet in May are 53304/5 (SP07 FCY/Z), based at Dunfermline and Glenrothes depots respectively.

An unexpected development in May was the purchase of Alexander H51/30D-bodied Volvo Olympians 16890/1/3-5 (L960/1/3-5 MSC) from Lothian Buses, where they were numbered 960/1/3-5.

Other Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympians transferred from Stagecoach North West at that time included 16359 (N359 MPN), 16641/6/56/8 (P271 VPV, R246/56/8 NBV); 16646/56 were allocated to Aberhill depot and 16658 to Dunfermline. Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814Ds 42355/6 (S355/6 KEF) were transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Bluebird in April and have been

allocated to St. Andrews depot. Ten Volvo Olympians were supplied to Rennie, Dunfermline under a leasing arrangement in May, comprising recently-acquired Alexander-bodied 16359 (N359 MPN), 16641 (P271 VPV), 16890/1/3-5 (L960/1/3-5 MSC) and resident Northern Counties-bodied 16406/16/39 (M306/16 DGP, N339 HGK).

Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40795 (N345 KKH) and similar Alexander-bodied 40468 (N468 RVK) have been acquired by Morrin, Renfrew. Similar 40095 (N95 ALS) was sold in April, for charity use.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

New 54032-4 (SF07 ANV/X, AOA) are further Scottish Citylink-liveried Plaxton Panther C65FL-bodied Volvo B12BTs, which arrived in April. Similar 54029-31 are also in these colours.

Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN 24.350s displaced by the new coaches were sold to Plaxton (dealer), Anston in April, comprising 50035/6/9/41/52/66 (T35/6 DFC, T39 DJO, T41, 52 BBW, W66 BBW). Similar 50045 (T45 BBW) was transferred to Stagecoach Bluebird in April.

Stagecoach Strathtay ST

Jonckheere C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52656 (V906 DPN) was transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach East Midlands in April. It has been given Scottish Citylink colours in lieu of National Express Shuttle livery. Plaxton Expressliner-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52309 (N620 USS, FSU 739, N620 USS) was transferred from Stagecoach Bluebird in May.

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D 42234 was repainted into Stagecoach group livery in April.

Mercedes-Benz minibuses which left the fleet in March comprise Reeve Burgess-bodied 709D 40178 (E287 OMG), Jubilee-bodied 711D 41187 (N127 GAG), TBP-bodied 814D 41348 (M289 TSF) and Devon Conversions-bodied 609D 41985 (N314 HUM).

Stagecoach Western ST

Two new Plaxton Profile Interurban C49FL-bodied Volvo B7Rs, 53302/3 (SF07 LCJ/K), joined this fleet in May and are allocated to Dumfries and Stranraer depots respectively, for use on services 114 (Dumfries-Moffat) and 500 (Dumfries-Stranraer).

April additions from Stagecoach Bluebird comprise Alexander B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40452 (L342 FWO); CH65/24F-seated Neoplan Skyliner N122/3Ls 50130-2/45/6 (SV54 ELUW/X, YN05 WEC/F); Jonckheere AC72F-bodied Volvo B10MA-55s 51061 (YSV 730, N561 SJ/F), 51062 (VCS 391, N562 SJ/F); and similar Plaxton AC70F-bodied 51070 (WLT 720, P670 LWB) — the latter trio was in this fleet until March 2006. Arrival of these coaches will release the Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN double-deckers for disposal.

40452, received in group livery, has been repainted all-over red as a replacement for the former London taxi used as a staff shuttle vehicle at Ardrossan. All other vehicles listed above (including the Neoplans) are to be given corporate livery in lieu of their Megabus blue livery — 50130/1/45/6, 51061/2 were repainted by May.

...continued overleaf



Left: Stagecoach Western 52359 (P159 ASA), the Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M repainted in Western SMT coach livery to mark the company's 75th anniversary. The lines of the high-floor Plaxton body have dictated a simplified version of this livery, which usually had white window surrounds with some black below the windscreen. PHIL HALEWOOD

FLEET IN FOCUS

Fleet:	Tim Dearman Coaches
Based:	Inchnavie Lower, Newbridge, Aness, Highland Region
Founded:	1992 by Tim Dearman and has remained a family business run by Tim and his wife Wendy, aided by a small team of helpers. Throughout, there has been a specific commitment to small groups and disabled passengers.
Where does it operate?	Private hires, contracts, tours and airport transfers throughout Scotland and farther afield. Some school services are registered locally in the Easter Ross area, but the most significant local service is the summer season Highland Cycle Bus, which was launched in April 2005 and runs between Inverness and Dumess (Smoo Cave) via Dingwall, Ullapool, Lochinver and Kinlochbervie. Dearman operated this route for five years before that on behalf of Highland Council, but Tim responded to requests from passengers and others by agreeing to provide the cycle facility, which received partial funding from Hitrans.
Livery:	Dark red and maroon.
How many vehicles?:	Seven vehicles are allowed on the operator licence, and seven are currently owned.
Most unusual vehicle:	In the current fleet, this undoubtedly is Leicester Carriage Builders-bodied Cannon Hi-Line W672 SVV bought new in 2000 (Fenton File, February), but Optare Solo YJ04 CCW used on the Inverness-Dumess service is rare with its towbar for the 12-bike enclosed cycle trailer. An earlier rarity was a CVE Omni — now ending its days as a store at the back of the garage — and an Esker Riada-bodied Mercedes-Benz has just been purchased.



The Solo and cycle trailer at Smoo Cave in August 2005. This journey through some of the most remote parts of the north-west Highlands takes 5hr 30min with a break at Ullapool. J. F. BAKER

Allover white ex-Truronian Alexander Dennis Enviro300 KW02 DRO (BN02 EDM) was on loan during the week commencing 16 April and East Lancs Esteem-bodied Scania N230UB demonstrator YN06 TGE was returned to East Lancs around then.

Two vehicles have been repainted into commemorative liveries to mark the 75th anniversary of Western SMT. As illustrated on p11 last month, Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian 16859 (N859 VHH) has been given a relatively rare version of Western's traditional red and cream colours with the cream areas applied as a band below the upper deck windows and around the lower deck windows. The gold block Western fleetnames used with this layout of the colours has produced a style only carried by the 10 Alexander-bodied Ailsas in 1978, but is very attractive nonetheless. Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52359 (P159 ASA) has been repainted into the white and black livery used for all Western vehicles in the 1930s and retained in postwar years for coaches. Both vehicles carry '75' belt and buckle devices.

Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M-62 52262 (M162 CCD) has been repainted into a mainly purple livery for use on the Arran Tour this year. Alexander Sprint-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 40057/63/99 (M657/63/49 FYS) were repainted into allover blue Magic Mini livery for use on services 71/72 (Dumfries-Castle Douglas/Kirkcudbright), which have been cancelled from 1 July.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian 16861 (N861 VHH) was transferred to Stagecoach Bluebird in April.

A short-term contract started on 9 April to provide Strathclyde Partnership for Transport service 356 (Cumnock-Dalmellington, Bellsbank and Burnton via New Cumnock), previously operated for SPT by Rowe, Kilmarnock. Sunday-only service A5 (Craig Tara Holiday Park-Ayr Market) was started on 29 April and will operate until 27 October.

Steele, Stevenston

This former A1 Service member acquired Plaxton C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R434 MEH (A5 FTG) in April, ex-North Dorset, Bournemouth.

Stepend, Glenmavis

GX07 BAU is another new Irisbus Agora Line to appear in North Lanarkshire in May, similar to that of Silverdale.

Stuart, Carluke

Roe-bodied Leyland Olympian BFP 134Y was acquired by Dawes, Heydon in January.

Sweeney, Muthill

The remains of Devon-bodied Mercedes-Benz L207D MSU 76V, Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D CGA 193X, Leith-bodied Freight Rover Sherpa E170 JSN and Carlyle-bodied Sherpa E115 SOG had gone by April.

Thomson Group, Glasgow

Berkhof C53F-bodied Dennis Javelin R567 MTF arrived in March ex-Robinson, Kimbolton. Further Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds were also added then in the shape of M357 JBO, N625 VSS, followed in April by N208 UHH and N124 YHH in May. They were previously Stagecoach Wales 40557, Stagecoach Western 40625 and Stagecoach North West 40008/24 respectively.

Walker Group, Barrhead

The recent intermittent operation of First Stop service 134 (Govan Cross-Castlemlisk) is being formalised by cancellation from 25 May, ending competition with similar First Glasgow service 34.

Watermill, Fraserburgh

Wadham Stringer C70F-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA M516 TVM (USV 803, M516 TVM, WSV 552, CX 61 AA) was acquired last September ex-Stuart, Carluke.

West Coast, Campbeltown

Former Tantivy Coaches Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts J 13853, 74393, 69267, 86370/2, 61334, 64744/5, 85325 and 11467 are being re-registered J10, 20,30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100 WCM respectively. We understand that six will be allocated to Oban depot and four to Ardrishaig.

Argyll & Bute Council Monday to Saturday service 416 (Oban, Tesco store-Longsdale Crescent), 417 (Oban, Tesco store-Pulpit Hill/Ganavan Sands) started on 7 May.

Western Isles Council

Plaxton C53F-bodied Dennis Javelin R917 HTW was acquired from Lochs, Leurbost in March.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Darts SF07 KCC/E entered service with this operator during May, in allover white but with small Whitelaw fleetnames and Whitelaw legal lettering.

East Lancs Kinetic-bodied MAN 18.240 demonstrator CU56 AVP was on loan during May.

Wilson, Gourock

Service X24 (Greenock, Kilblain Street-Silverburn shopping centre via Bishopton and Renfrew) has been registered to operate on Thursdays and Saturdays from 26 June; a more comprehensive service was the subject of a Bus Route Development Grant application made at the start of the year.

Wilson, Rhu

Alexander B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N604 VSS was acquired in May ex-Stagecoach Western 40604.

WJC Buses, Chapelhall

YV03 (FN03 DXJ) is a Jonckheere Modulo C53F-bodied Volvo B7R acquired in May ex-Steele, Addingham 80. It is to be used on Scottish Citylink work.

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D. Booth, E. Cameron, C. Carberry, C. Douglas, J. Dunne, Lothian Buses, W. Milne, G. Munro, B. Nicol, S. Oliver, PSV Circle, Stagecoach Bluebird, Stagecoach Glasgow, renfrewshirebus@yahoo.com, Stagecoach Western, scotlandbus@yahoo.com, sescotbus@yahoo.com, R. Walter and J. Young have supplied news items this month. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

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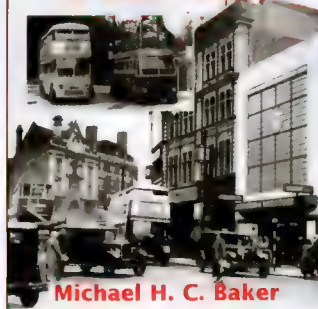
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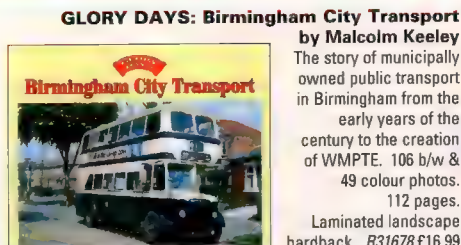
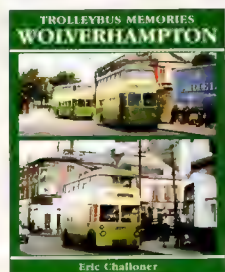
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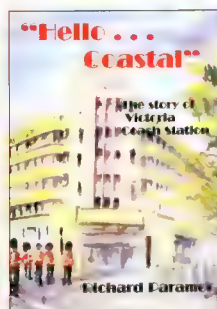
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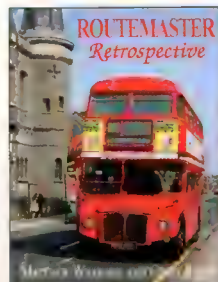
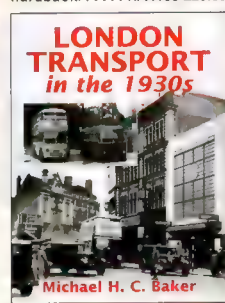
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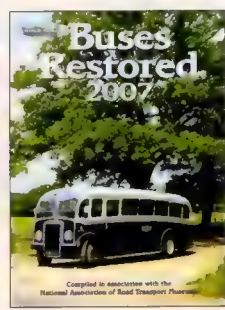


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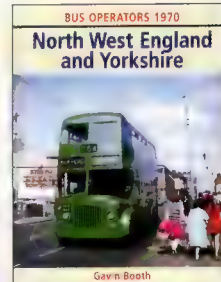
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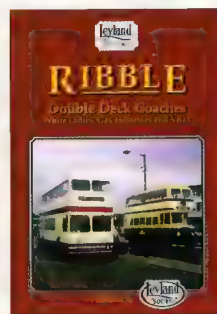


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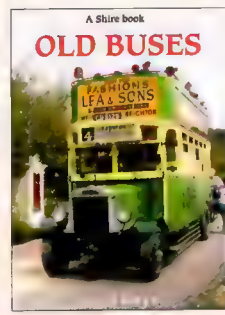
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MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

The first 40 of the 110 new Volvo B7R/Wright Eclipse SchoolRun B66FL schoolbuses will be numbered 201-40 (MEZ 7201-40). As illustrated in this month's news section, 201 — to be allocated to Newtownards — was exhibited at the Albion local bus managers' conference near in Warrington in May.

The latest Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere 320 MkIV Goldliners to be resealed to B69F are 1605/7/19/20/9 (JAZ 1605 etc), while 1995 B10M/Plaxton Excalibur coaches 508/9 (GAZ 5508/9) have been drafted into the driving school.

Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 396 (FXI 396) has been reinstated from reserve at Craigavon. However, similar 402/8 (JEZ 4093, FXI 402; JEZ 8979, FXI 408) and 2606 (LXI 6606) have been withdrawn and sold rapidly to Hamill, Ahoghill (dealer) for breaking along with 371 (DXI 3371), 392/5 (JEZ 8983, FXI 392; KEZ 5807, FXI 395), 411/5 (JEZ 8977, FXI 411; JEZ 9341, FXI 415) and 1339 (RXI 3339), while 455 (NEZ 1078, GXI 455) is licenced but retained in reserve. Tiger/Van Hool driver trainer 593 (NEZ 1091, OXI 523, A165 MNE) is withdrawn following an engine failure.

News of buses acquired for preservation is that Hamill has taken Leyland Leopard/Alexander 328 (FEZ 8628, BXI 328) with a view to its restoration, while Leopard 338 (BXI 338) has gone to Kells Bus Museum, Cork, which also has acquired Tiger/Alexander N-type 340 (DXI 3340) from previous purchaser Dempsey, Celbridge. The Irish Transport Trust has acquired Tiger 343 (DXI 3343) and Mike Nash, Dorking has acquired 370 (DXI 3370), the unique Gardner-engine Tiger bought for Ulsterbus. C. Begley, Lisburn — who has a collection of preserved vehicles — has acquired 4904 (HOI 1904), a 1975 Leyland Leopard/Alexander that has been a towing vehicle at Lisburn depot since 1992.

Other sales are of DAF MB230/Plaxton Paramount 3500 679 (SXI 1679) to Kelleher, Tipperary and Tiger/N-type 432 (KEZ 1840, GXI 432) to Bell, Ballymena (non-psv).

Of vehicles already sold out of the fleet through dealers, Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere coaches (ex-MkIV Goldliners) 1553 (DAZ 1553) is with Edwards, Llantwit Farde, 1556 (DAZ 1556) with Annvale, Grimsby, 1559 (DAZ 1559) has joined others with Olympus, Harlow and 1570/4 (DAZ 1570/4) with Brown, Roedcliffe, upseated to C70F. Similar 1562 (DAZ 1562) has been re-registered BIG 7048 by Woottens, Chesham, having also carried L553 NUD.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright TS 823 (OXI 525, NXI 6823) is back with Autocar, Five Oak Green, ex-Staff Pay, Chatham. Similar 885 (AAZ 8885) passed to Morns, Pencoed in April 2006 then to Easyway, Bridgend in May last year, while 845 (NXI 6845) is re-registered 90 DL 6503 at McLaughlin, Convoys. McLaughlin also has 830/56 (NXI 6830/56) and 1807 (SXI 2807) being used for spares, and 1806 (SXI 2806), a Mercedes 811D prepared for service but not in use. Mercedes-Benz 609D/Ulsterbus conversion 813 (MXI 3813) passed to UK Bus Dismantlers from Anning, Peterchurch. Volvo B10M-49/Caetano Algarve

II 512 (JAZ 5512) has been re-registered 96 DL 6108 with McGonagle, Buncrana.

Leyland Tiger/Duple Canibean 552 (BXI 5552) ex-Castell, Trethomas, moved to an unknown operator in Lancashire in August 2005. DAF MB230/Plaxton 697 (WNR 118X, HIB 9482, WNR 118X) also at Castell, Trethomas, passed for scrapping in July 2005.

The Irish Transport Trust has been celebrating 40 years since the formation of Ulsterbus on 17 April 1967 with a tour of the province using preserved vehicles, mainly Leyland Leopards, Bristol RELL6Gs and recently released Leyland Tigers. The ITT also has earlier vehicles, but these were not available for running on this occasion.

Metro

Former Citybus Bristol RELL6G/Alexander 2531 (AXI 2531) has passed from Dempsey, Celbridge to Kells Bus Museum, Cork.

Flexibus

Renault Master 47 (IAZ 6047) has been delicensed to reserve.

Dublin Bus

It has been confirmed that orange LED destination displays will be fitted to all new buses starting with Volvo B9TLs EV1-50, due from June, and tri-axle VT21-70 due in or after September. There are no plans to retrofit these displays in the existing fleet. Ringsend intends to operate EV1-8 on route 3 (Whitehall-Belfield).

Phibsboro-based Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 H49/27F AV178 (00 D 70178) was substantially damaged by an engine and rear saloon fire on 18 May near Chapelizod and is unlikely to be repaired.

New weekday peak routes 74 (Eden Quay-Stocking Lane, Rathfamham via Earlsfort Terrace, Rathmines, Terenure Cross and Templeogue Village) and 74A (Eden Quay-Stocking Lane via Earlsfort Terrace, Rathmines, Orwell Road, Rathfamham and Ballyboden) began from Ringsend on 21 May with six journeys per day. One week earlier, in anticipation of this change, 'Euro' duties at Ringsend were transferred back to Broadstone/Phibsboro, where hitherto stored new Volvo B7TLs AX600-14 entered service for the first time. Volvo Olympians RA317/8 were returned to Phibsboro' off loan and RA199-210 were temporarily mothballed at Ringsend.

Bus Éireann

Usually reliable sources suggest that 60 VDL SB4000/Berkof Axial coaches will join the fleet within a few months. Double-deck coaches may also be purchased to augment Dublin area commuter carrying capacity and, towards the end of 2007, 30 more SP-class Scania K/irizar PBs (18 for CIÉ Tours and 12 for express duties) will be delivered. All these coaches will be wheelchair accessible. Fifty-six new buses (36 replacements and — subject to securing route operator licences — 20 for expanded capacity) are to be bought over the next three years.

Twenty-four of the new buses (five replacements and 19 for service expansion) are destined for the Limerick region in a €6.7million (£4.6million) investment programme, one of a series being unveiled as part of the Irish government's 10-year Transport 21 plan. This particular programme, announced on 30 April when transport minister Martin Cullen officially opened the refurbished fully accessible bus station in Ennis, proposes some new and enhanced city services and enhancements to commuter

routes. Ennis will have a town service (with 18 daily departures) covering eastern and western residential areas and reaching nearby Clarecastle. A similar 18million (£12.3million) plan for the Cork area, announced on 10 May, includes a proposed new town service 229 for dormitory town Ballincollig and new Mallow rail feeder service 242A serving Mitchelstown and Fermoy.

The overnight express service network (calling at Dublin Airport) continues to progress successfully, with passenger numbers climbing steadily. This niche operation is currently available on services 1 (Dublin-Belfast), 32 (Dublin-Letterkenny) and 33 (Dublin-Derry) and is likely to be expanded to other corridors. It is attracting passengers who would otherwise have to pay for more expensive overnight accommodation or car parking when catching early morning flights. At weekends, there are relief workings on most service 1 overnight departures. Some of the coaches on this route (usually Scania SP49-51) work three shifts every 24hr.

Scania SP85 was hired by the Irish Labour Party for use as a battle bus in the weeks leading to the general election on 24 May. It had contravision messages on most windows and many seats were removed to make space for tables.

OTHER OPERATORS

Callinan, Claregalway

Coach 06 G 609, in Eurolines livery, operates service 861 (London-Dublin) during daytime and service 871 (Dublin-London) overnight.

Circle Line

As illustrated in last month's news section, 211 (07 KE 7253) is a new Volvo B7TL/East Lancs Olympus double-decker delivered in April. It is one of four cancelled by Highland Country.

Collins, Carrickmacross

New here is 07 MN 1516, a Van Hool T9-bodied Scania coach.

Dualway (McConn), Rathcoole

A notable arrival here is of 07 D 29, the first Volvo B9TL/East Lancs Visionaire open-top double-decker built. New B9TL 07 D 45122 has a similar covered top East Lancs Olympus body with coach seats.

Volvo Olympian/Alexander (Belfast) R942 YOY has been acquired ex-Transdev London for conversion to open top.

Former Lothian and Halpenny, Blackrock ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 83 LH 983 has been sold to City Tours, Belfast.

Furlong, Dublin

New Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban 07 D 43154 and existing Volvo B10M/Jonckheere coach 02 D 46701 have been operating a new Localink-branded service introduced on 3 May. It operates half-hourly between 07.00 and 23.30 on Mondays to Saturdays, 10.00 to 23.30 on Sundays, linking Kingston (Ballinteer) — near the M50 ring road — and Stillorgan Shopping Centre via Balally and Goatstown. It meets the Luas tramway at Balally and both the Aircoach and Dublin Bus 46A QBC at Stillorgan. A second new B7RLE may follow shortly.

Halpenny, Blackrock

06 LH 2257 is an 81-seat East Lancs-bodied Volvo B7TL currently in use. Another double-decker operated is 01 D 46502, an East Lancs-bodied Volvo B7TL previously on demonstration with Bus Éireann.

Pierce Kavanagh, Urlingford

New here is 07 KK 3017, a Volvo B12M with Jonckheere bodywork.

Lough Swilly

Further Bristol RELL6Gs fitted resealed from B48F to B51F with seatbelts are 464/71/5 (84 DL 2359/61/4, AXI 2523/50/43), while similar 463/9/74 (84 DL 2354/8/63; XOI 2525/30, AXI 2547) are resealed from B51F to B52F. RELLs 456/8 (84 DL 2344/9, BXI 2567/9) are withdrawn, but 458 is reported sold for preservation.

Wharton, Crossdoney

07 CN 1042 is a new Irizar PB-bodied Scania coach.

Left: The first East Lancs Visionaire-bodied open-top Volvo B9TL built, 07 D 29, has entered service with Dualway on its Dublin City Sightseeing tour. Ten similar buses are entering service this year on Arriva's Original Tour in London. **DARREN HALL**





St Helens museum extends summer opening



Above: One of the current restoration projects at St Helens is on Salford Corporation 109 (TRJ 109), a 1962 AEC Reliance with Weymann 45-seat bus body. **MALCOLM FLYNN**

The North West Museum of Road Transport will open to the public from 11.00 to 16.00 on Thursdays and Fridays from 26 July to 31 August, in addition to its normal weekend opening over the same hours. It will also open on bank holiday Monday 27 August. (www.website@hallstreetdepot.info)

Since it reopened last September, the museum has already attracted over 4,000 visitors and it hopes to be able to extend weekday opening to other holiday periods, subject to availability of volunteers to staff the premises at these times. Lack of volunteers prevents it from opening on other days over the summer.

The museum also has some secure covered accommodation available to rent in the main exhibition hall at £60 per calendar month for buses and lorries and £30 for cars, vans and small commercial vehicles. Apply in writing to the chairman at North West Museum of Road Transport, The Old Bus Depot, Hall Street, St Helens, WA10 1DU.

Ayrshire museum to hold August open weekend

Preliminary work is underway for an open weekend at the new Beith Transport Museum in north Ayrshire on 25 and 26 August. This follows a low-key open weekend at Easter.

Although announced initially (Preservation Update,

November) as a new home for the Bus World museum previously in Glasgow, the site is now managed by a new registered charity, the Transport Preservation Trust. The Bus World charity is to be dissolved. TPT says the Bus World title

was used for a short period following the move to Beith 'but a carry over of events and comments from its past showed this was going to be severely detrimental to the intended new project'.

Rebuilding of the interior of the 53,000sqft building will allow a 4ft viewing area around each exhibit, which currently includes vehicles lent by Stagecoach and Dodds of Troon. The rebuilding work has delayed regular public weekend opening until early July; there will be an admission charge.

■ Details from Beith Transport Museum, Robert James House, Willowyard Road, Beith, Ayrshire, KA15 1JG, phone 0845 120 8091, fax 0845 120 8092. The Supplies for Industry work apparel company quotes the same address, phone and fax numbers in its advertising.



Left: Buses kept at Beith include former Kelvin Central 1967 (LHS 747V), an Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa new in 1979 as Central SMT AH23. It was a static visitor at the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum's running day on 20 May.

Right: One of the most notable participants in the Historic Commercial Vehicle Society's 46th London-Brighton run on 6 May was the Cobham Bus Museum's newly re-restored London Passenger Transport Board STL441 (AXM 693), a June 1934 AEC Regent with Chiswick-built body. When sold out of London service in 1952, it went to a Dutch buyer and returned to England in 1974. **DAVID JUKES**

Below right: Quantock Motor Services celebrated its 30th anniversary over the early May bank holiday weekend with running days around Somerset from Minehead. One of the biggest surprises was the repainting of its recently acquired ex-Huddersfield Joint Omnibus Committee 217 (CCX 777), a 1945 Duple lowbridge-bodied utility Daimler CWA6, as Potteries Motor Traction B58 with advertising for what some would believe is every bus spotter's favourite tippie. When it appeared at the Potteries Gathering in Stoke on 20 May, the transformation was complete, as it carried registration KEH 8 from a similar bus that PMT acquired with the Brown's, Tunstall business in 1951. At the Friends of King Alfred Buses running day at Winchester on 1 January, its red Huddersfield livery looked in need of loving care.

TOM BRAUND

Two events planned for Warminster area

Although there won't be a Warminster & West Wilts Running Day this year, there will be opportunities to ride on free vintage buses in the area later in the season.

On bank holiday Monday 27 August, in connection with the Corsley Country Show, an hourly 253 (Warminster-Frome) service will operate, with additional

Warminster-Corsley short workings as required. Most vehicles will be from the Kelvin Amos collection.

On Sunday 21 October, UK Transport Bookbargains will hold its annual sale of books, diecast models and much more at the Baden Powell Scout Hall, Station Road, Warminster (10.00-16.00). Starting at 09.40, a small number of local interest vintage buses will

operate a half-hourly feeder service from Westbury rail station, plus a couple of other routes for the benefit of customers attending the sale.

For further details, send a stamped addressed envelope marked 'Corsley Show service' or 'UK Transport service' to Bob Eade, UK Transport, 4 Saxon's Acre, Warminster, BA12 8HT.



Above: Operating a tour from the Gateshead MetroCentre rally on 6 May is preserved Newcastle Corporation 221 (221 JVK), a 1962 Leyland Atlantean with Alexander body to a design built almost exclusively for operators in north-east England. **PAUL SEAMAN**



Left: Bristol Greyhound-liveried 2138 (BHU 92C), an ECW-bodied Bristol MW6G 39-seat dual purpose single-decker at the Bristol Road Transport Collection's Harbourside Rally and Running Day in the city on 20 May — the 33rd annual rally to be held in

or around Bristol. This was one of seven MWs diverted from Eastern National. It is now owned by Dr Mike Walker, who provided 12 vehicles in association with the Bristol Omnibus Vehicle Collection. **CHRISTOPHER CARTER**



Southend to rival Winchester with New Year running day

The annual New Year's Day King Alfred running day in Winchester will have a rival on 1 January 2008 when Stephenson's of Essex intends to stage a similar event in Southend when neither Arriva nor First will operate conventional services.

Stephenson's plans to run a network of routes based on those operated in the area before deregulation in 1986. It will charge fares and use between 15 and 20 vehicles — a mixture of its own vehicles and heritage buses mainly halfcab double-deckers, hired from other operators — and intends that the services should appeal to the general public as well as visiting enthusiasts.

Stephenson's director Lyn Watson says: 'Most running days are aimed squarely at the

enthusiast market. We want to do something slightly different, by trying to provide a comprehensive network of services for the benefit of local people, but at the same time appealing to enthusiasts. We'd like to hear from operators who are interested in joining us, especially if they have buses of the types that used to run for Southend Transport and Eastern National.' Some operators have already offered to join in the event and Stephenson's hopes participating vehicles will include examples of a London Routemaster and RT, a Leyland Titan PD3 and Atlantean, a Daimler Fleetline and possibly a Bristol K.

Operators interested in joining in the running day should contact Stephenson's planning manager Richard Delahoy by phone on 0845 260 0136.



Two British-owned Bristol RELH coaches — one ex-Western National, one ex-Crosville — travelled to Germany for the second Historic Omnibus Europatreffen international preserved bus gathering held at the joint Technik Museums at Sinsheim and Speyer in Baden-Württemberg on 26-29 April.

Owner Steve Graham's Royal Blue-liveried Western National 2351 (837 SUO) had come second in a competition at last year's EFE Showbus International rally at Duxford, with EFE and others subsidising the cost of the trip for one of the coaches. John Stanley's London Transport Country Area Routemaster RML2306 won first prize, but had to pull out of the event at the last minute owing to delays in the organisers securing the necessary permits to allow this 4.46m (14ft 6in) high vehicle to pass through France, Belgium and Germany; 4.4m is the maximum permitted height in Europe.

Preserved buses and coaches from many parts of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, France, Hungary and Sweden all took part in the event, their owners each being greeted personally by joint organiser Konrad Auwärter, former owner of Neoplan Karosserie (now part of MAN). His co-organiser is local bus enthusiast Reiner Morch. Another gathering is planned for Belgium in August next year and again at Mank, Austria in 2010. Sinsheim might host another event in 2009.

Below: One of the most striking vehicles at Sinsheim was this 1951 right-hand-drive Swiss-built Saurer with streamlined bodywork by Ramseier & Jenzer, the coachbuilder that Volvo contracted in the 1980s to build its ill-fated C10M coach. **JOHN STANLEY**



Above: Steve Graham's Crosville Bristol RELH6G coach, CRG106 (AFM 106G), passing through the Rhine Valley on its way to Sinsheim, the river flowing to the right of the road, the railway running to the left and one of many schloß castles on a cliff behind. **ALAN E. MOORE**

Middle right: Rik Vanheusden of the Belgian operator De Zigeuner brought this 1949 Duple Vista-bodied Bedford OB, still in the livery of former owner Classique Sun Saloon Luxury Coaches of Paisley. It was originally EY 9025, new to Jones of Menai Bridge.

ALAN E. MOORE

Below right: This 6.7m long 1958 Setra S6 coach and matching luggage trailer were entered by Fass Reisen of Wilhelmshaven. It has a four-cylinder Henschel engine. **JOHN STANLEY**





Above: One of the exhibits in the Auwärter Museum, this is a 1950 Mercedes-Benz O3500 with six-cylinder Mercedes OM312 engine and bodywork by Gottlob Auwärter. **JOHN STANLEY**

Below: Looking like a cross between a shooting brake, an ambulance and an inappropriately gaudy hearse, this actually is a 1950 Chevrolet with 17-seat Jonckheere coach body. Like the Bedford OB, it was entered by De Zigeuner. The coach behind it is a 1954 Henschel-engined Setra S8 owned by EvoBus, the manufacturer's current owner. **ALAN E. MOORE**

Bottom: Carrying appropriate registration ME OLD 1 2 is one of the Austrian-owned entries, a 1964 Mercedes-Benz O321H coach of Kerschner Reisen. **JOHN STANLEY**



Left: RML2306 ready for the trip it was unable to make to Sinsheim. Buses paid for the fuel to take it to Germany (we paid instead for owner John Stanley to drive there by car) and EFE is producing two diecast models of it. Unlike most recently preserved Routemasters, this 1965 example is in original condition with AEC AV590 engine, tungsten lighting and original moquette. It only ever operated in the Country Area, being withdrawn by London Country in December 1973. London Transport re-acquired it in 1977, stripped it of parts and sold it for scrap in 1978. Its remains were acquired for preservation in 1985, parts from several other Routemasters being used to restore it to working condition in 2004. **EXCLUSIVE FIRST EDITIONS**



RALLY CALENDAR UPDATE

JUNE

- 16/17** Weymouth. Inner Circle Group rally to commemorate 40th anniversary of the introduction of Bristol REs on the Portland routes. **Walspool** Festival of Transport, Powys Castle. **Swansea** Festival of Transport. **Cobham** Bus Museum single-decker day. **Durham** North East Bus Preservation Trust display at Belmont park-ride. **Manchester**. Accessible transport event at the Museum of Transport. **Brownhills, Staffs**. Wiggly Worm Running Day, Chasewater Heath station, Chasewater Railway. **Sandholt** Trolleybus Museum Blues and Twos Trolley Weekend. **24** **Birmingham**. Aston Manor Transport Museum and The Transport Museum, Wythall. Two Museums Day. **Hemel Hempstead** Running Day. **Blackpool**. Totally Transport, New South Promenade. **Sheffield** Festival of Transport, Graves Park. **Chatsworth House, Derbyshire**. Preserved Bus Gathering. **Glasgow** Vintage Vehicle Trust free heritage bus service between Museum of Transport, Burnhouse Road and Victoria Park every 15min between 13.45 and 17.00. Website: www.gvvt.org

JULY

- 1** **North Weald** Bus Rally, North Weald Airfield, near Epping. Vintage bus service 339 from/to Epping Central Line station from 10.10. Blue Triangle excursion bus 718 from London Victoria (Wilton Road stop H) 09.30 and 10.00 via Westminster, Embankment, Blackfriars, Farringdon, Angel,

7/8

8

15

- Highbury & Islington and Finsbury Park stations (leaves Finsbury Park stop G 10.00 and 10.30); returns from North Weald at 16.30 and 17.00. Fare on 718 is £10 including admission and day rover. **St Helens** 80th trolleybus anniversary at North West Museum of Road Transport. **Blackburn**. East Lancashire Rally at East Lancs Coachbuilders, Whitebirk. **Burton upon Trent**. Bus & Coach Rally, Coors Visitor Centre. **Blackwood Showground, Coephill** Welsh Heartland Transport Festival. **Lowestoft**. ECW event at the East Anglia Transport Museum, Carlton Colville. **Ringwood, Hants**. Wessex Transport Society Festival of Transport, Avon Heath Country Park. **Sandholt** Trolleybus Museum Trolley Day and Vintage Cycle Event. **Leyland, Lancs**. Fishwick centenary bus rally, British Commercial Vehicle Museum and open day at Golden Hill Garage, Tuer Street. Leyland Society gathering of buses at Leyland Trucks assembly plant. **Birmingham**. Aston Manor Transport Museum open day and Outer Circle Running Day. **Swanley & Sidcup, Kent**. Classic bus running day. **Manchester** Museum of Transport. Book and postcard fair. **Alton** Running Day & Bus Rally, Arstley Park. **Fleetwood** Transport Festival (Tram Sunday). **Kaighley** Historic Vehicle Rally, Marley Showground.

Full details of rallies and other events in 2007 were published in our March and April issues. For back numbers, please contact our subscriptions department (details page 3).



BOOKS

PLAXTON 100 YEARS

STEWART J. BROWN, IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING, ISBN 978-0-7110-3209-5, 286mm x 220mm, 144pp, HARDBACK, £19.99

The cliché that one should never judge a book by its cover is particularly true about this new publication to mark Plaxton's centenary. The cover could mislead you into thinking that it is a lavish company brochure from which all but the best bits of the past have been airbrushed, when in fact it is an objective view — warts and all — of the company and its products.

Plaxton, which commissioned the book and provided access to its own archives, is to be congratulated for allowing Stewart Brown to take this constructively critical look at its products. Overall, it's a kindly book, with positive words written about most of the vehicles for most of the time, but its honest admission that some had shortcomings helps provide the right balance. The author's credentials are impeccable, not just as a well-known writer on bus and coach matters, but also his nearly 30 years' experience of working for and with UK manufacturers. The combination of his own knowledge and recollections of key former Plaxton employees makes this an all-time rare book on its subject: one that tells the early history and provides an accurate account of more recent developments like the slow birth and quick death of TransBus.

It's the story of a Scarborough joiner who dabbled in various markets before settling on luxury coach bodies, of a company that expanded beyond its local market in Yorkshire to supply all points of the British Isles and went on to become a major manufacturer of bus bodies and have modest success in a few export markets. It's more than that, though, as the Plaxton story echoes that of the British coach operating industry. Its coach designs reflected those operators' changing demands, whether for full fronts in the early 1950s, bus grant doors in the 1970s or the styling and quality of European market leaders in more recent years. For me, the caption to one picture of the Plaxton stand at the 1948 Commercial Motor Show reinforced how much coaching has changed, for surely today no self-respecting operator from Sale, Cheshire would call itself Lingley's Sale-Away Touring Company. Or would it?

It is well illustrated with black and white and colour photographs — many of vehicles in service rather than posed — and a selection of Plaxton advertising material over the decades. These pictures include vehicles many of us have either forgotten Plaxton ever built or never knew about at all: like a 1951 rear-engined Foden bodied for the first time eight years later with an early Panorama design, 1954 BMMO C3s lengthened by 6ft in 1962 and fitted with that year's version of the Panorama, a one-off Panorama Elite built in 1974 on a Mercedes-Benz



O303 with the manufacturer's own front dash panel or such exotic exports as kit-built Bustlers and Supremes assembled in the Philippines on Japanese Hino and German MAN chassis.

The book tells us that, so far, the only double-deckers built at Scarborough were the 99 Paramount 4000 coaches built between 1984 and 1990, but one

of its greater revelations is that as early as 1939 the company was planning a double-deck bus body, a project abandoned on the outbreak of World War 2. 'A strange diversification for a

company which was building very few single-deck buses,' the author comments aptly. Among his later revelations is a drawing of the double-deck body (pictured above) proposed 60 years later to accompany the Verde and Pointer single-deckers, a product ultimately rendered unnecessary when Plaxton acquired Northern Counties.

The book ends with an alphabetical illustrated listing of its named bodies (Beaver to Viewmaster, 321 and 425), pictures that also give an added flavour of Plaxton's wide range of customers.

ALAN MILLAR

DUBLIN BUS, BUS ÉIREANN

JONATHAN McDONNELL, DARREN HALL & IAN MOLLOY, IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING, ISBN 978-0-7110-3229-3 (Dublin) 3230-9 (Bus Éireann), 190mm x 245mm, 80pp, HARDBACK, £14.99 each

It was 20 years ago, on 2 February 1987, that Coras Iompair Éireann's bus operations were transferred to two subsidiary companies, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann, heralding the start of a transformation few could have anticipated at the time. For not only did the bus companies adopt new identities and pursue different vehicle policies, but the country they served went through a whirlwind of change. For decades a land from which its people emigrated in search of prosperity, its vibrant economy is attracting immigrants from across the world.

The author/photographers — known to many *Buses* readers — reflect that change in these two books. Just compare the people boarding buses in 1987 with those in more recent years.



Neither book is an exhaustive history of everything the two bus companies have done. Rather, they are well illustrated (all in colour) with most types of vehicles, probably all of their liveries (including some given up as experiments) on a huge variety of routes in vastly contrasting locations. A good number of these shows buses doing what they are built to do — picking up and carrying large numbers of people. Some earlier shots in the *Bus Éireann* book capture just how varied and ramshackle the fleet was then, while others — especially one of a 28-year-old Leopard schoolbus in a Mayo farmyard — show how remotely rural are some of its operations.

ALAN MILLAR

BUS & COACH RECOGNITION, FIFTH EDITION

ALAN MILLAR, IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING, ISBN 978-0-7110-3136-4, 185mm x 120mm, 176pp, SOFTBACK, £9.99 each

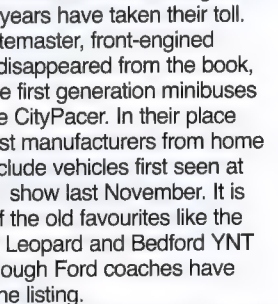
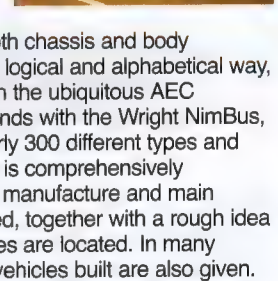
It's hard to believe that eight years have passed since the fourth edition of this handy pocket-size volume, which serves as an invaluable point of reference, was last published. Keeping up with the times, Alan Millar has squeezed 276 colour photographs into this 176-page volume (up from 160 pages last time), which describes and illustrates most of the different types of buses and coaches in service within the UK.

Cleverly arranged and indexed to show both chassis and body manufacturers, in a logical and alphabetical way, the book opens with the ubiquitous AEC Routemaster and ends with the Wright NimBus, encompassing nearly 300 different types and variants. Each type is comprehensively described, years of manufacture and main purchasers are listed, together with a rough idea of where the vehicles are located. In many cases numbers of vehicles built are also given.

Clearly the eight years have taken their toll. Apart from the Routemaster, front-engined buses have all but disappeared from the book, as have many of the first generation minibuses including the Optare CityPacer. In their place have come the latest manufacturers from home and abroad, and include vehicles first seen at the Euro Bus Expo show last November. It is nice to see some of the old favourites like the Bristol RE, Leyland Leopard and Bedford YNT still clinging on, although Ford coaches have disappeared from the listing.

The selection of colour photos takes you on a fascinating journey around the UK, as well as to rallies and shows, and a comprehensive introduction takes you effortlessly around the technical aspects and everyday jargon of the bus world. For both the newcomer to the industry, and the long-established observer, the book is packed with detail and provides an excellent point of reference and education.

ANDREW JAROSZ



THE LITTLE RED BOOK 2007



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LITTLE RED BOOK UPDATES AND NEW ENTRIES



Below are some of the updated entries that appear in the latest issue of the Little Red Book Passenger Transport Directory for Britain and Ireland. The LRB is published in September and updates to the book regularly appear in BUSES magazine.

(Note: * denotes a reply from the manufacturer/service provider/local authority or operator. Addresses of officers of societies, that appear in the Little Red Book, have been left off the entries below for reasons of privacy)

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- Yorkshire 2007. UK. Buses. Feb / March. Visits to Harrogate and Kettleigh in February 2007 and then Leeds March, Streetcar in service amongst others.
- Manchester. 2007. UK. Buses. Filmed March 15th, a weekday afternoon visit with a fleet of around 100 Envisors by then in service, a much improved fleet.
- Ipswich. 2007. UK. Buses. Filmed March 17th, a Saturday visit with a plethora of independent operators, Ipswich many liveries and First most friendly.
- Norwich. 2007. UK. Buses. Filmed March 17th in Norwich, a



- brigit Saturday afternoon, many buses just a few days into service, also Kings Lynn in 2005.
- Liverpool. 2007. UK. Buses. March 21st. A midweek visit to the city centre, now more than ever one big building site with bus services disrupted.
- Milton Keynes / Bedford. UK. Buses. March 2007. Glorious sunny weather, lots of liveries in Milton Keynes', universal route branding in Bedford.
- Cheshire. UK. Buses/ March / April 2007. Visits to Warrington, route branding and new buses, Runcorn and Widnes, glorious sunny weather.
- Edinburgh. UK. Buses. April 2007. A Good Friday visit to Edinburgh where we had good sunny weather with buses presented to the usual high standard.
- Glasgow. UK. Buses. April 2007. We continue our Good Friday coverage in Glasgow, a bit more by now but lots of new First Glasgow buses.
- Motherwell, Hamilton, Isle, Jura, Arran. April 2007. UK. Buses. A wide ranging look at buses at Easter with operators and liveries galore.
- Paisley, Greenock. April 2007. UK. Buses. Bright spring sunshine in Greenock, even a routemaster in service, great for 'independents'.
- Newcastle. Gateshead. April 2007. UK. Buses. Another amazing bright sunny spring visit with a whole range of new route brandings and new buses.
- South Shields. Sunderland. Durham. April 2007. UK. Buses. New liveries and route brandings galore all in cloudless blue sky, a sheer joy.
- Brit Truck Lymm. April 2007. UK. Trucks. A sunny day at Lymm truck stop with hectic coming and goings, masses of carriers featured, non stop action.
- Brit Truck Gloucestershire 2007. April. UK. Trucks. A steep hill near Cheltenham provides the back drop for this another hour of non stop commercials.
- Northern Ireland. UK. Buses. April 2007. A look at Belfast Friday afternoon rush hour then Sat morning plus Deny, Newtownards & Coleraine.
- Dublin. Ireland. Buses. April 2007. Monday morning rush hour traffic near Trinity College, lots of activity including competitive commuter services.
- Dublin. Ireland. Buses. April 2007. More scenes on Monday from Dublin including city centre and coaches around the main inter urban bus station.

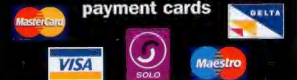
- Brit Truck Penrith. UK. Trucks. April 2007. Wonderful warm sunny spring weather and friendly drivers on a roundabout off the M6 motorway.
- Brighton. UK. Buses. April 2007. A wonderful sunny day with clear blue sky, diversions via the Aquarium brings loads of buses onto the seafont.
- Portsmouth / Fareham. UK. Buses April 2007. Another sunny visit with The Hard and city centre in Portsmouth plus Fareham bus station.
- St Helens UK Buses. May 2007. A weekday rush hour afternoon visit to St Helens, rather sedate compared with usual but superb weather.
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- Nottingham. UK. Buses. May 2007. A Saturday morning visit to one of the countries most colourful bus centres, modern fleet with route brandings.
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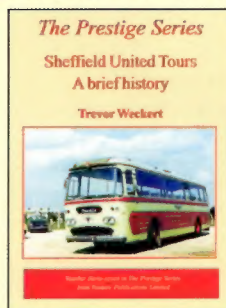
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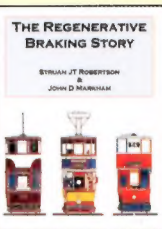
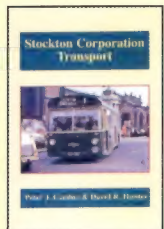
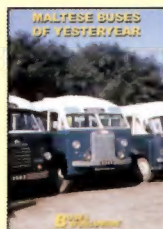
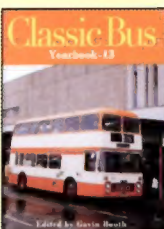
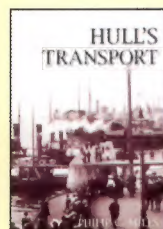
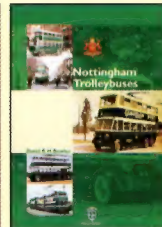
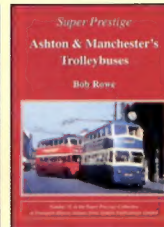
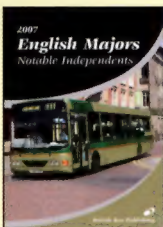
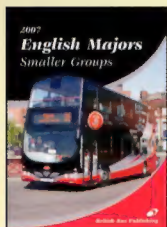
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